

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Cannon, Maria (2015) Families in crisis; Parenting and the life cycle in English society, c. 1450-1620. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/30331/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE



**UniversityLibrary**

**FAMILIES IN CRISIS: PARENTING  
AND THE LIFE CYCLE IN ENGLISH  
SOCIETY, C.1450 – 1620**

**M. CANNON**

**PhD**

**2015**



**FAMILIES IN CRISIS: PARENTING  
AND THE LIFE CYCLE IN ENGLISH  
SOCIETY, C.1450 – 1620**

**MARIA CANNON**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
University of Northumbria at  
Newcastle  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the  
Faculty of Arts, Design & Social  
Sciences

June 2015



## **Thesis Abstract**

This thesis offers a new perspective on the nature and experience of parent-child relationships c.1450-1620. Focusing on correspondence and family papers from selected aristocracy and gentry families, it argues that authority in parent-child relationships was renegotiated throughout the life cycle, particularly at points of tension or crisis such as marriage or death. These 'crisis points' are episodes which show us the negotiations that took place around domestic authority and give a personal insight into the emotional responses of parents and children and the nature of authority within early modern society. This thesis addresses a gap in knowledge about the changing reciprocal nature of this relationship over the life course. It understands 'parent' and 'child' as relational statuses experienced differently at different points throughout the life cycle. These new definitions argue that 'parent' and 'child' were not statuses that were limited to a single life stage but impacted on an individual throughout life. It reveals that individuals were motivated by societal expectation of family roles and also exhibited a range of emotional responses in reaction to perceived threats to the smooth running of family life according to the rules and structures of age, gender and status. The expectations associated with being a parent or a child continued to shape the actions and behaviour of individuals well into adulthood, as loyalty and obedience between parents and children was challenged and renegotiated. The thesis also considers how different roles within the family could overlap, leading to conflict as family members sought to manage their obligations and responsibilities as parents, children, siblings or step-relations. The personal source material is put into context with legal records and conduct literature considering the conflict between ideals of family life and its lived experience.



## **Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Parents, children and emotions	4
Crisis and authority	13
Sources and methodology	20
Structure	32
 <b>Chapter One – Education</b>	 <b>35</b>
Aims and experience of education	37
Parental responsibilities and advice	45
Changes in authority	64
Parenting adult children	72
Conclusion	80
 <b>Chapter Two – Marriage and Married Life</b>	 <b>81</b>
Marriage arrangement	85
Marriage as a crisis point	93
Married life	106
Old age and grandparenting	116
Conclusion	127
 <b>Chapter Three – Death</b>	 <b>129</b>
Emotional responses to death	131
Death, inheritance and the law	137
Support and tension after death: widowed mothers and eldest sons	145



Changes in domestic authority: eldest sons as fathers, sons, and brothers	152
Conclusion	158
 <b>Chapter Four – Remarriage</b>	 161
The stepfamily: stereotype and reality	167
Emotional effects of remarriage on children	176
Unity and tension in blended family networks	182
Legal and financial aspects of remarriage	191
Educational and career prospects in a blended family	197
Religious and political effects of remarriage	203
Conclusion	215
 <b>Conclusion</b>	 219
 <b>Bibliography</b>	 225

## **Abbreviations**

BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CAC	Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal
CP	Cecil Papers, Hatfield House Archive
CUL	Cambridge University Library
Long.	Longleat Archives, Wiltshire
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
ONDB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
SP 1	State Papers: Foreign and Domestic, of Henry VIII
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
HMC Bath	<i>HMC Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath preserved at Longleat, Wiltshire</i> (London: 5 vols, 1904 – 1981)
HMC Gawdy	<i>HMC Report on the Manuscripts of the Family of Gawdy, formerly of Norfolk</i> (London: 1885)
HMC Portland	<i>HMC Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, preserved at Welbeck Abbey</i> (London: 10 vols, 1891 – 1931)
HMC Rutland	<i>HMC Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, C. G. B., preserved at Belvoir Castle</i> (London: 4 vols, 1888 – 1905)
HMC Middleton	<i>HMC Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire</i> (London: 1911)

## **Acknowledgements**

Firstly, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my supervision team, Neil Murphy, Gaby Mahlberg and Sasha Handley for their support and guidance from the initial conception of my research project, to the completion of this thesis. Even through periods of research leave and moves to other institutions or countries, they have been unfailing in their encouragement, advice, and faith in my work.

I would also like to thank the University of Northumbria for funding my research and the Department of Humanities for supporting my research activities. I have greatly benefitted from the expertise and encouragement of many members of staff in the department, past and present, and I would like to thank all those who have offered feedback on my work, comments on seminar papers, and general advice on academic life during my PhD research. My thanks also go to the administration staff in the Faculty who have guided me through the ever-changing and complex procedures necessary to complete this project.

Research for this thesis was additionally funded by the Institute of Historical Research and I am grateful for their assistance which was invaluable allowing me to access the archival resources needed for this project. I am indebted to the staff at the archives and libraries that I have visited for their help and answers to all of my queries. I am also obliged to The Fran Trust and the Royal Historical Society for generously funding me to attend conferences where I received helpful feedback on my work from other researchers. Throughout my doctoral study I have found the academic community to be welcoming and supportive and I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have taken time to discuss my work, offer their advice, and assist me in developing my teaching and research skills.

To the PGR community at Northumbria; (there are too many of you to name here, but you know who you are!) I cannot thank you all enough for making my experience here so far from the isolated and lonely one I had been warned it might be. I couldn't have wished to be part of a friendlier, more supportive, and more encouraging group. Thanks also go my friends, (and excellent proof-readers), Mike, Sarah and Avon, who, from a distance, have never failed to offer a sympathetic ear to any problems or worries I may have had.

Finally my thanks go to my parents, without whom this thesis would never have been completed. I cannot convey the enormous amount I owe them for supporting and encouraging me throughout my education, and their time and patience in helping me finish this project.

### **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 24/01/2012.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 84,346 words**

Name:

Signature:

Date:



## **Introduction**

The parent-child relationship was one of the cornerstones of family life in late medieval and early modern England, and also one of the most influential on the lives of individuals. This thesis is an in-depth study of this relationship throughout the individual and family life cycle. It posits a new, temporal conception of childhood as a status held throughout life, the obligations and expectations of which influenced individuals and the decisions they made. It utilises new methodologies and approaches to add to our understanding of emotional relationships in families in an era when they were underpinned by notions of obedience and duty, and emotional expression could be obscured by these ideals. Family correspondence is the main body of sources analysed by this thesis and it adds to current research on how this genre is read. It applies the new methodology put forward by James Daybell which considers the materiality of letters as well as their content.<sup>1</sup> By combining this methodology with the framework of the History of Emotions, an approach which has begun to filter into research on the history of the family, it argues that expressions of emotions can be seen in family letters, even when considering the conventions and limitations of this type of source. Collaborative composition and the altering of letter-writing formulae can indicate the strength of parent-child relationships, and the ways in which authority was negotiated in them. This thesis shows that authority was renegotiated between parents and children throughout life and each chapter takes a different crisis point as its focus to explore this process. It also reveals that individuals were motivated by societal expectation of family roles and also exhibited a range of emotional responses in reaction to perceived threats to the smooth running of family life according to the rules and structures of age, gender and status.

The growth of interest in the history of childhood and parenting has expanded our understanding of the experience and agency of children in the past, but this research usually limits the concept of 'child' to young children from infancy to adolescence. The findings of this thesis show that family status was an important factor for individuals and, particularly, the continuing status of 'child' meant that many adult men and women were in a subordinate position for much of their lives to one or both of their parents. Parents continued to exercise control and demand the fulfilment of obligations from their adult children which significantly impacted on the way individuals could assert authority. The consideration of 'child' as a status that

---

<sup>1</sup> James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512 – 1635* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

endured throughout life has implications for the study of the history of childhood, parenting, and the history of the family in general. For the English aristocracy, the parent-child relationship did not always sit easily within the patriarchal structure by which they were bound. A patriarchal society which advocated the obedience of children to their parents throughout life, but also the obedience of all family members to their male head of household could cause tension between parents and their adult children.<sup>2</sup> Historians need to consider family status as an important factor affecting individual behaviour and the exercising of domestic authority, in addition to the influence of age, class, gender and religion. The expectations associated with being a child continued to shape the actions and behaviour of individuals well into adulthood, as loyalty and obedience between parents and children was challenged and renegotiated. This new approach to individual decision-making and duty therefore adds a new perspective to the histories of this period and sheds light on the way family networks operated in late medieval and early modern England.

This thesis gives an original insight into the dynamic and mutable nature of the parent-child relationship throughout the life course. It concludes that parenting was a role that most took on for life, and parents played an important role in the lives of their adult children, continuing to parent them by offering advice and guidance, practical and emotional support, and asserting discipline. This relationship also became more reciprocal with adult children supporting parents and becoming important parts of their political networks. Building on these findings, this thesis shows that the statuses of 'parent' and 'child' were relational, and changed and developed across the individual life cycle. For children this meant that they were always in a subordinate role as 'child' as long as their parent was alive, even if they held other roles such as 'father', 'husband' or 'family head'. This overlap of roles could cause confusion and friction in families as different family members attempted to assert individual authority and found their obligations and duties complicated by their status within the family.

Tension was often caused by the confusion inherent in intersecting roles held by an individual. This thesis also shows that the individual life cycle and the family life cycle could overlap in ways which caused a crisis in authority between family members. It uses letter collections of aristocratic and gentry families from c. 1450 – c. 1620 to explore crisis points in individual and family life in which family members altered and

---

<sup>2</sup> Gordon J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

adapted their roles to fit new circumstances. Personal letters reveal the emotional responses of individuals to family crisis and the process by which authority was negotiated. These moments allow us to focus on the parent-child relationship as many of these crisis points are related to this central relationship in the family and how it changed as children grew into adults. David Cressy's work on the rituals of the life cycle identifies birth, marriage and death as key in looking at the lives of early modern families, as does Edward Muir's study, which argues that the idea of ritual belongs to the sixteenth century and marks an intellectual shift in the understanding of human behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Cressy neatly identifies that, 'Life cycle rituals expose society's raw nerves. Each of the major rituals of baptism, churching, marriage, and burial was potentially an arena for argument, ambiguity, and dissent.'<sup>4</sup> The research in this thesis draws on this work on rituals of family life but looks at personal sources which tell us how people responded emotionally to these times of change or tension. In addition, it adds a valuable new insight into family relationships by focusing on crisis points not necessarily associated with ritual, such as separation of family members. Although others have acknowledged the importance of crisis points in affecting family relationships, there has not yet been a study which uses these crisis points across the life cycle as its central theme.<sup>5</sup>

Crisis points as episodes which highlight moments when family relationships went through changes and tensions, sit at the heart of this thesis. Chapters one and two take an in-depth look at the transitional periods of education and marriage arrangement and show that these episodes could cause significant problems in the parent-child relationship as adolescent children began to assert adult authority. However, it also demonstrates that parents continued to exercise parental responsibility into the adulthoods of their children, by providing financial and emotional support. Drawing on Miriam Slater's approach by emphasising the importance of the social roles of individuals in understanding familial interaction, this thesis also shows that the language used by families to refer to each other indicates

---

<sup>3</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England 1760 – 1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), has a chapter looking at parent-child relations through the life cycle in her wider study of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century parenting, but this approach has not yet been the focus of any studies of the late medieval or early modern period.



how different roles were experienced and negotiated over time.<sup>6</sup> Compared to modern descriptions which have very specific meanings, terms like 'parent', 'child', and 'mother' had a significance relating to the authority they carried. The terms and categories used by families to describe each other has been most fully explored in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Naomi Tadmor who argues that, in studying historical concepts of the family, 'we will be able to understand better how familial and social relationships worked, and how they were understood when they so often failed to work.'<sup>7</sup> She states that the flexibility in terms for naming kin were 'potential bonds' as well as indicating biological relationships and this was significant in defining status and social obligations in kinship groups.<sup>8</sup> This thesis builds on Tadmor's approach by arguing for the fluidity in family roles and the obligations associated with them in the long sixteenth century. Although as Slater rightly acknowledges, little emphasis was placed on the qualities of each individual in early modern families, it is evident from the terminology used, and the everyday activities of families, that individuals could take on different roles and responsibilities.<sup>9</sup> This flexibility was often a response to societal expectations of how people should relate to one another, although we also see families adapting these rules to fit their circumstances. Specific family structures including the presence of any stepchildren or siblings influenced these changes as did family crises such as the death of the husband and father, the focus of chapter three. A blended family structure is often seen as a modern phenomenon caused by increasing divorce rates but in fact was also characteristic of medieval and early modern families, which were made up of diverse types and structures and will be considered in the final chapter.

### **Parents, children and emotions**

This study uses the term 'nuclear family' to refer to the core group of the family: parents and their children. Although this thesis is concerned with the nuclear family and its relationships, includes some discussion about other family members who took on a parental role, particularly in the absence of one or both birth parents.<sup>10</sup> A

---

<sup>6</sup> Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 10 – 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Some studies have looked at siblings in the early modern family and there is certainly scope for more research on these relationships; Giulia Calvi and Carolina Blutrach-Jelin, 'Sibling relations in family history: conflicts, co-operation and gender roles in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. An introduction', *European Review of History*, vol. 17, No. 5 (2010), pp.

medieval or early modern individual might have understood the term 'family' not necessarily to refer to only those related to them by blood, but used the word to denote a household.<sup>11</sup> As described by Jacqueline Eales, the term 'family' had 'a variety of distinct and overlapping meanings' in the early modern period which could refer to a wide network of relations.<sup>12</sup> Peter Laslett's work on the changing structure and size of the family offers several further definitions of the family including the simple/nuclear family, elementary/biological family, conjugal family unit, simple family household, extended family household, and multiple family households.<sup>13</sup> Modern scholarship has largely agreed that the term 'family' refers to people related to each other although not necessarily living with each other. The term 'household', in contrast, is used to describe those living together within one house but who might not necessarily be related. So 'family' would include parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins as well as other blood relatives, while 'household' would include any family members living within a household plus any others including servants or apprentices.

Evidence presented in this research shows how a variety of family and household members could take on parenting roles for children, especially if they were separated from their parents and so part of a different household. Families were often reliant on the help of others to support and educate their offspring. This thesis examines the impact of these other familial and household relationships on parents and children and argues that parents and children continued to maintain a particular bond in spite of distance and these other influences. Susan Broomhall's collection, *Emotions in the Household, 1200 – 1900*, is part of a new area of historical debate which seeks to access the emotional lives and experiences of those in the past. It intentionally focuses on the household rather than the family and explores different sources of authority in co-resident groups rather than related groups who might live separately.<sup>14</sup> However, many of its questions and conclusions also apply to the

---

695 – 704; Naomi J Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Naomi Tadmor, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, vol. 151, no. 1 (1996), pp. 111 – 40; David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher and Jon Mathieu (eds.), *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-Term Development (1300 – 1900)* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Jacqueline Eales, 'The Family and kinship', *Early Modern History*, vol. 1 (1992), p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Laslett (ed.), *Household and family in past time: Comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 28 – 32.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Emotions in the Household, 1200 – 1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

nuclear family, even if members were not co-resident. This thesis uses a definition of the term nuclear family to refer not to familial bonds created by household, but to the bonds between parents and their children regardless of location. In the introduction of her book on the family, Rosemary O'Day asks whether the family experience is 'wider than that of any domicile', and indeed, it was very common for aristocratic and gentry families in this period to be displaced and occupy different locations, even when children were young.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, to adequately consider parent-child relationships in this context, we must understand that the structures that underpin them are not limited to the household.

The emergence of family history as an area of historical research in the 1970s was initially concerned with researching demographics of family life and how the family functioned as a key institution in society.<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Stone argued controversially that the early modern period transformed the typical family from units characterised by a preoccupation with maintaining kin networks, to models based on 'companionate marriage' and the close, nuclear family.<sup>17</sup> Current scholarship still critically debates Stone's thesis yet historians have rarely analysed the lived relationships of family life in detail when considering the changing nature of the early modern family structure.<sup>18</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke's 1984 book on the English family engaged with these debates arguing for gradual change in family life from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, but also used a range of personal source material, particularly diaries and autobiographies to explore the varied experiences of family life in this period.<sup>19</sup> He considered events such as marriage and death, and relationships between husband and wife and parent and child. This thesis adds to his body of work on the life of the late medieval and early modern family by taking an in-depth look at one of the key relationships in the family between parent and

---

<sup>15</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500 – 1900* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 7 – 8.

<sup>16</sup> Laslett (ed.), *Household and family in past time*; Jack Goody, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lutz K. Berkner, 'Recent Research on the History of the Family in Western Europe', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 35 (1973), pp. 395 – 405; Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500 – 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family Sex and Marriage in England 1500 - 1800* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Alan MacFarlane offered an alternative picture of marriage and family life, highlighting continuity in *Marriage and Love in England 1300 – 1840* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). More recently Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster's collection *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) situates current research within this debate.

<sup>19</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450 – 1700* (London: Longman, 1984); *English Family Life, 1576 – 1716: An Anthology From Diaries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) and *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480 – 1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

child. It moves on from the debates around Lawrence Stone's theories of change by highlighting the importance of emotions in family life and the range of individual experiences. It shows that parents and children expressed affection and love, but that these bonds were tested by the obligations and responsibilities expected in family life in this period. The perceived disobedience of a child or dereliction of responsibility by a parent could result in expressions of anger, hurt and betrayal.

Some historical research on parenting has grown out of an increased interest in the history of childhood, which also emerged in the 1970s, sparked by the controversial theory of modernisation proposed by Philippe Ariès. In a similar vein to Stone who described the emergence of affective relationships in families, Ariès argued that the Middle Ages had no real concept of childhood, and that affection for children was something that developed in the early modern period.<sup>20</sup> This history of childhood is moving away from such debates with new perspectives focusing instead on issues of gender, health, and emotions.<sup>21</sup> Historians have often focused on parent-child relations as a way to access the experience of the child. Linda Pollock's many publications on the history of the parent-child relationship in early modern Europe have given historians an excellent framework to explore further issues of parenting and the way in which parents and children related to each other.<sup>22</sup> Her book *Forgotten Children* highlighted an awareness of the concept of childhood in the early modern period and set out the developmental stages of children. However, the history of parenting should not limit itself to solely considering the interaction between parents and young children. Parenting and parental responsibility did not cease once children reached the legal age of majority or a suitable age for marriage,

---

<sup>20</sup> Phillippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> Adrian Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Phillipe Ariès', *History and Theory*, vol. 19 (1980), pp. 142 – 43; Margaret L. King, 'Concepts of Childhood: What We Know and Where We Might Go', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 60 (2007), pp. 371 – 407; Sandra Cavallo and Silvia Evangelisti (eds.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family, vol. 3 The Early Modern Age* (Oxford; Berg, 2010); Merridee L. Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England, c. 1400 – 1600* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011); Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011); Hannah Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580 – 1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Joanne Bailey, 'The History of Mum and Dad: Recent Historical Research on parenting in England from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries', *History Compass*, vol. 12, no. 6 (2014), p. 489 – 507.

<sup>22</sup> Linda A Pollock, *Forgotten children: Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); 'Training a child in the way he/she should go. Cultural transmission and childrearing within the home in England, circa 1550 – 1800', in *Education and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families, Schooling and Youth Cultures*, ed. Johan Strum, Jeroen Dekker, Richard Aldrich and Frank Simon (Paedagogica Historica Supplementary Series 2, 1996), pp. 79 – 104 and 'Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 23 (1988), pp. 3 – 27.

a minimum of sixteen years for boys and fourteen for girls. This extension of the conception of 'child' into adult years moreover reveals that the parent-child relationship was a highly reciprocal one with agency exercised on both sides. The parent-child relationship changed over time and was renegotiated throughout the life course. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos criticises scholarship on parent-child relations which often encapsulates the relationship 'in terms of a set of stable properties rather than of dynamic relations that evolve across the whole life span.'<sup>23</sup> This study builds on Ben-Amos's methodology by applying it to the aristocratic classes of England in the long sixteenth century and showing that these dynamic relations adapted and changed in response to crises within family life and the tensions inherent in families where individual life cycles overlapped.

The history of parenting, in contrast to the history of childhood, considers the expectations and experience of parents, although historians have rarely drawn attention to the different implications of parenting young or adult children. Much work on the history of parenting so far has concentrated on gendered aspects of parenting, considering the social and cultural roles of maternity and paternity, and how important they were to individual identity.<sup>24</sup> Historians like Caroline Bowden have argued persuasively that a study of 'parenting' could exclude mothers as much printed literature at this time used the word 'parent' as synonymous with 'father'.<sup>25</sup> This thesis situates parenting within the context of gender theory, but takes a new approach by considering parenting as a shared exercise between mothers and fathers. Although there were certainly differences in the roles of mothers and fathers in the long sixteenth century, parenthood was an important part of life and identity for men and women. Research on motherhood and fatherhood has been excellent in exploring the nature and experience of parenting, but this thesis offers a new perspective by looking at how these gendered roles worked together as part of a family. The experience of motherhood and maternity has had a larger share of attention from historians concentrating on the role in isolation.<sup>26</sup> Barbara Harris

---

<sup>23</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal Bonding: Parents and their Offspring in Early Modern England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 25 (2000), p. 291.

<sup>24</sup> Melissa Hollander, 'The Name of the Father: Baptism and the Social Construction of Fatherhood in Early Modern Edinburgh', in *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, eds. Elizabeth Ewan and Janay Nugent (Aldershot; Ashgate, 2008), pp 63 – 72; Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London: Pearson Longman, 2004), p. 81.

<sup>25</sup> Caroline Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries in England and Wales: A study of attitudes and practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Wilson, 'The myth of motherhood a myth: the historical view of European child-rearing', *Social History*, vol. 9 (1984), pp. 181 – 98; John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler

examines motherhood as one aspect on which aristocratic women built their careers, showing that although they were often dependent on the family as an institution, it laid the foundation for their careers and the flexibility of their relationships within it could empower them.<sup>27</sup> The research in this thesis builds on her work by exploring how families experienced conflict and how it shaped their emotional connections, but also arguing that mothers' relationships with their children were not static and the way they changed over the life course affected how women experienced life. It also brings together research on mothers and fathers and looks at how parents worked together to bring up their children. More recently, fatherhood and paternity have been explored in more depth by historians of all periods.<sup>28</sup> The language used to describe fatherhood changed over time and does not necessarily conform to a straightforward model of continuity in constructions of masculinity.<sup>29</sup> Alexandra Shepard argues for increasing fluidity in male identity from the sixteenth century but argues that this identity remained focused around many of the same fixed points, one being fatherhood.<sup>30</sup> By considering mothers, fathers, and children of both

---

(eds.), *Medieval Mothering* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); Candace Gregory, 'Raising the Good Wife: Mothers and Daughters in Fifteenth Century England', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth Century Europe*, eds. Douglas. L. Biggs, Sharon. D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 145 – 67; Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Maternal Measures: Figuring caregiving in the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Valerie Fildes (ed.), *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England* (London: Routledge, 1990); Kenneth Charlton, 'Mothers as educative agents in pre-industrial England', *History of Education*, vol. 23 (1994), pp. 129 – 56; Jennifer C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1992); Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450 – 1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 241 – 44.

<sup>28</sup> Becky R. Lee, 'A Company of Women and Men: Men's Recollections of Childbirth in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2002), pp. 92 – 100; Joanne Bailey, "'A Very Sensible Man": Imagining Fatherhood in England c.1750 – 1830', *History*, vol. 95 (2010), pp. 267 – 92 and, 'Paternal Power: the pleasures and perils of "indulgent" fathering in Britain in the long eighteenth century', *The History of the Family*, vol. 17 (2012), pp. 1 – 17; Special Issue on fatherhood, *Journal of Family History*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1999); Claudia Nelson, *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850 – 1910* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); L.T. Broughton and H. Rogers (eds.), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); Rachel E. Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representation in Middle English Texts* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013); Julie-Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class 1865 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914 – 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Bailey, "'A Very Sensible Man'", p. 292.

<sup>30</sup> Alexandra Shepard, 'From anxious patriarchs to refined gentlemen? Manhood in Britain c. 1500 – 1750', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44 (2005), pp. 281 – 95; see also Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent (eds.) *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, sex and marriage* (London: Longman, 1999).

genders this thesis synthesises current research on gender and parenting, concluding that, although gender was an important factor in the way parents and children experienced their relationships, other factors, including age, personality, and family status, also had an impact.

The idea of 'natural affection' and 'natural parenting' was a common one in early modern treatises on family life. In one of the most popular household guides of the seventeenth century, William Gouge wrote, 'Admirably much is that which parents do for their children, which they would never do, if there were not a natural affection in them to their children.'<sup>31</sup> Parents situated themselves in a unique position to instruct and guide their children towards maturity, as their 'natural' bonds meant they were better placed than anyone else to do this. Children of elite families in this period were often separated from their 'natural parents' and came under the authority of a diverse set of additional parental figures including other relatives, tutors, family employees and step-parents. In a society where it was deemed essential for a child's education that they gained experience away from the family home, parents had to maintain authority over their children from a distance, and sometimes in opposition to the authority of other adults acting as surrogate parents. Many writers offered a broad description of 'parent', for example in William Lowth's 1591 translation of a French text stated that, 'All are understood by the name of Parents, under whose government we live'.<sup>32</sup> In the context of sixteenth century society, the idea of 'natural' parenting was both an expression of the emotions of parental love, but also a necessary concept in maintaining authority in the parent-child relationship. Gouge noted that children were to obey all 'such as are in the place of naturall parents' including grandparents, parents-in-law, foster-parents, guardians and tutors by 'the law of honesty, meetnesse and conueniency' but that they were bound to respect their natural parents 'from whom [they] receiued their being' by 'an absolute necessity'.<sup>33</sup> Even from a distance, parents retained their place as the most important person in their child's life. By focusing on correspondence, a source created by the displacement of families, this thesis will argue that, although their actions were sometimes dictated by the expectation of what it meant to be a parent

---

<sup>31</sup> William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London: 1622), p. 181 – 82.

<sup>32</sup> Barthélemy Batt, *The Christian mans closet Wherein is contained a large discourse of the godly training vp of children: as also of those duties that children owe vnto their parents, made dialogue wise, very pleasant to reade, and most profitable to practise, collected in Latin by Bartholomew Batty of Alostensis. And nowe Englished by William Lowth*, (1591, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622), p. 488.

in early modern English society, their letters also display the level of care and interest they had for their children.

The History of Emotions as an approach to history has gathered increasing interest as, over the last few decades, various scholars have considered the difficulties of studying and understanding emotions in the past. The term 'emotion' itself did not emerge in English until the seventeenth century and its meaning did not come to resemble its modern usage as a term to categorise mental states until the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> There is a change evident in source material, which shows that emotions and sentiments were increasingly expressed in family letters across the period. This is in line with a general increase in sentimentality and the idealisation of family life which emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so the context in which emotions were expressed changed.<sup>35</sup> Peter and Carol Stearns in the 1980s coined 'emotionology' as a term to refer to the standards a society has to the expression of emotion and argued this was a feature of the modern world which stemmed from the emergence of modern advice manuals.<sup>36</sup> However, early medieval historian Barbara Rosenwein has disputed this stating that arguing 'emotionology' is a modern phenomenon and prohibits a study of emotional standards in earlier times. She coined the term 'emotional communities' and suggested that researchers looking to uncover systems of feeling should look at how communities and the individuals within them defined and assessed emotions including whether they were valuable or harmful to them, the nature of the affective bonds between people they recognised, and the modes of emotional expression they expected, encouraged or tolerated.<sup>37</sup> William Reddy has also considered the process by which emotions are managed and uses the term 'emotives' to refer to the effects of emotions.<sup>38</sup> All of these ideas and approaches have greatly added to the field of family history with recent studies on family relationships and love considering spousal relationships, fostering, friendship, and material culture among other aspects of family life in the

---

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Dixon, "'Emotion': The History of a Keyword in Crisis", *Emotion Review*, vol. 4 (2012), pp. 338 – 44.

<sup>35</sup> Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 4 (1985), pp. 813 – 36; Jan Plamper, 'The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory*, vol. 49 (2010), pp. 237 – 65.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).



context of the emotions felt and expressed by those in the past.<sup>39</sup> This thesis will add to the burgeoning literature on emotions and family life by considering affective bonds between family members.

Rosenwein's approach which considers 'emotional communities' is a useful one for this study which looks at the effect of changing family life cycles on the parent-child relationship. If an emotional community is one which shares values and goals then how do individuals alter their relationships when they occupy different families and emotional communities at once: for instance, if an adult child marries and starts a new family, but is still part of their natal family, or if a parent remarries and creates a new family which incorporates children from their first marriage?<sup>40</sup> Although taking into account the social constructionist view that emotions are culturally determined and not biologically programmed, her approach opens up the possibility that emotions could be expressed differently within the same society if they were judged differently by different communities. Linda Pollock argues that early modern letters can tell us more about the function of emotions than the experience of them and shows the important place of anger in early modern society.<sup>41</sup> It had a crucial function in families to highlight the transgression of boundaries by individuals who did not conduct themselves in an acceptable way. Research in this thesis agrees with Pollock by also finding that tension in family life was usually caused by a dereliction of duty or responsibility by a parent or child, but explores the range of emotions expressed by parents and children in these situations. Her question 'for what ends was it legitimate to express [emotions]?' is one which this thesis considers by comparing the conduct of different families and comparing their lived experience with conduct literature.<sup>42</sup> However, it also argues that the feeling of emotions recognisable to a present-day reader can be inferred from personal source material. In many ways, it is difficult for the historian to go beyond looking at the expression of emotion as we find them in sources, and these are certainly influenced by society, culture, community, and individual family behaviour and values. This thesis does not argue that parental love, and the tensions caused by the conflict of goals and obligations in a family that could disrupt affection, was felt in the same way

---

<sup>39</sup> Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Broomhall (ed.), *Emotions in the Household*; Sally Holloway, 'Romantic Love in Words and Objects during Courtship and Adultery c. 1730 to 1830' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway 2013).

<sup>40</sup> Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>41</sup> Linda A. Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2004) pp. 567 – 90.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 569.

throughout history. But the research presented here does show that common goals and ideas about parenting and parent-child relationships were shared by individuals and couples who were part of the English elite classes in the late medieval and early modern period. These were linked to concern for the welfare of children, the importance of preparing them for adult life, and the awareness that their behaviour would affect other family members. These concerns were often dictated by a patriarchal society that valued family reputation and obedience but expressions of affection, as well as anger and frustration, are evident in many sources; expressions that are readily understood by today's reader.

### **Crisis and authority**

In Tadmor's reflections on continuity and change in English kinship relations, she argues that new approaches to family relationships which focus on interest and emotions have illuminated the field, but studies should go beyond this and examine expectations and frustrated expectations among kinship groups.<sup>43</sup> The focus on crisis points which highlight tension and frustrated individual aims is a new approach taken by this thesis and is a novel angle to look at the history of affective relationships within families. Domestic authority between family members was affected by crisis points and roles within the family were challenged, especially the parent-child relationship. As Pollock argues, 'family life in practice was a daily compromise among individual interests in which it was not always clear whose aim had primacy.'<sup>44</sup> Broomhall asserts that notions of power are essential to a study assessing the impact of household emotional communities on the individual and seeks to answer further questions about how tensions in these hierarchies determined life within the household.<sup>45</sup> Evidence presented in this thesis argues that these changes were significant and it is accurate to describe the transition stages of education, marriage, death, and remarriage as 'crisis points' where relationships needed to adapt and change to fit into new family circumstances. It shows that affective ties between parents and children shaped their relationships with one another whether by providing mutual and reciprocal support, or by adding to tension and acting in opposition to other roles held by individuals. Looking at these 'crisis points' is essential in understanding how domestic authority was exercised and expands our knowledge of family life beyond the ideal presented by contemporary

---

<sup>43</sup> Naomi Tadmor, 'Early modern English kinship in the long run: reflections on continuity and change', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 25 (2010), p. 26 – 27.

<sup>44</sup> Pollock, 'Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England', p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Broomhall, 'Introduction', in *Emotions in the Household*, p. 14.

conduct literature, which usually avoided any discussion of these difficult moments.<sup>46</sup> When families found themselves in periods of crisis, feelings of love and affection were often at odds with duty and responsibility. Parents usually took on responsibility for the prosperity of the family as a whole at a time when adolescent and young adult children began to make individual decisions and test their authority within the household. When family structure became more complicated, after a death or remarriage, the preservation and nurturing of affective ties was crucial in securing a happy family life where all members worked towards the same wider goals.

Age was a key determinant of power in families. Historians looking at representations of the 'ages of man' concept have explored medieval ideas about the individual life cycle. It was widely understood in the Middle Ages and early modern period that people progressed through different stages with different characteristics attributed to different ages. Depictions showing three, five, seven, ten or twelve ages were all common. Kim Phillips describes two approaches to life cycle study: looking at either the meaning attached to each life stage, or analysing the experiences.<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Sears and J. A. Burrow detail the various schemes, their origins and the perceptions of appropriate behaviour associated with each one.<sup>48</sup> In recent years, more attention has been paid to evidence of women in the 'ages of man' tradition as life cycle studies have developed.<sup>49</sup> Sara Read uses 'occasions of bleeding' including first menstruation and post-partum flow to conceptualise the female life cycle stating that these biological experiences were significant as transitional stages in socio-cultural experience.<sup>50</sup> However, as Merry Wiesner-Hanks argues, a focus on women's biological experience hinders the comparative study of a separate life cycle.<sup>51</sup> Relegating women to the sphere of childbearing and household activities creates a separate life cycle for them, ignoring any possible

---

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen M. Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London: Europa Publications Ltd, 1981), p. 62.

<sup>47</sup> Kim M. Phillips, 'Margery Kempe and the Ages of Woman', in *A Companion to 'The Book of Margery Kempe'*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> Deborah Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300 – 1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); In *English Aristocratic Women*, Barbara Harris refers to the 'ages of women' as the uxorial cycle.

<sup>50</sup> Sara Read, *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, p. 4.

similarities with the life cycle of men. This thesis presents a new perspective on family history by considering how age and the life cycle altered an individual's relationships with their family members. Gender has been explored as an important factor in determining domestic authority with scholars such as Alison Wall arguing for the ambiguous position held by women who owed deference to their husbands but commanded obedience from children and servants.<sup>52</sup> Hers is part of a body of literature examining the roles held by women in late medieval and early modern society and how they functioned within a patriarchal system. Research by Barbara Harris, Jacqueline Eales and, more recently, Nicola Clark on aristocratic women and their place within family life, politics and society as a whole have informed the work of this thesis that acknowledges gender as a factor in the negotiation of authority between parents and children.<sup>53</sup> It adds to our understanding of domestic authority by arguing that age was also a key determinant of power in this relationship. Even in a patriarchal system where adult men had primacy, they could still find themselves expected to defer to the wishes of their mothers, or grandmothers. Alternatively, elderly parents might come to rely on adult children for companionship and comfort in their old age.

Although the life cycle is now a common lens through which to analyse social history, the link between the life cycle and family and parenting history has not been fully explored by medieval and early modern historians.<sup>54</sup> Sociologists have used various frameworks to study family life including the developmental or life cycle approach which argues that stages in the family life cycle have a significant influence on individual behaviour.<sup>55</sup> This approach has influenced modern historians, notably Tamara Hareven, whose work explores this synchronisation of 'individual time', 'family time' and 'historical time' (meaning the individual and family life cycles in a wider historical context), which is used as part of the life course paradigm to consider the changing nature of familial relationships.<sup>56</sup> This refers to the simultaneous development of an individual's life cycle at the same time as a family life cycle and within the wider historical context, for instance, any social and political change. It

---

<sup>52</sup> Alison Wall, *Power and Protest in England 1525 – 1640* (London: Arnold, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*; Jacqueline Eales, *Women in early modern England, 1500 – 1700* (London: UCL Press, 1998); Nicola Clark, 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family During the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509 – 1547' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*; Sears, *The Ages of Man*.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen L. Nock, *Sociology of the Family* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), pp. 17 – 18.

<sup>56</sup> Tamara K. Hareven, *Families, History and Social Change: Life-course and Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), p. 128.

also understands the interdependence of lives as a key concept of the life cycle approach.<sup>57</sup> This thesis argues that familial roles and the responsibilities and obligations associated with them were mutable and that parents and children adapted these roles, depending on their stages in the life cycle. An awareness of the age and life cycle stage of the person they were interacting with was crucial in the negotiation of authority in the family.

Remarriages highlight the overlapping of individual life cycles but also the overlapping and converging of different family life cycles where an individual started a new family but also had responsibilities for their previous family which now existed in a different form. Marriage did not always signal the end of one family's relationship and the start of another but one more event in the process of generational development. How these different stages of the life cycle overlapped and coincided is crucial in understanding how parents and children related to one another and exercised authority within those relationships. This thesis explores the issue of domestic authority and how it was redistributed and challenged at different stages in the life cycle. As children aged, their relationships with their parents changed as power dynamics altered and children began to assert their own adult independence.<sup>58</sup> Shifts in domestic authority throughout the life cycle, often at points of crisis reveal important information about family relationships and especially parenting, including how roles within the family were viewed, how authority was distributed, and on what factors this depended.

Independence has been identified as a key feature of masculinity in early modern England, although studies of single women have also shown that independence was achievable for women, both financially and in terms of decision-making.<sup>59</sup> Becoming independent was linked to process of becoming an adult as individuals began careers, came into inheritance, or married.<sup>60</sup> However, independence to make decisions free from family expectation was difficult to achieve for both genders. For many, a living parent meant that there would always be an authority figure with

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel G. Fuchs, 'Introduction to the Forum on the Changing Faces of Parenthood', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 29 (2004), pp. 331 – 38.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, "The part of a Christian man": the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England', *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays presented to David Underdown*, eds. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlanksy (1995), p. 217; Pamela Sharpe, 'Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England', *Gender and History*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1999), pp. 209 – 32.

<sup>60</sup> Laura Gowing, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge 2012), p. 47.

influence in their lives, regardless of their age. Parents were also bound to their children by ties of responsibility throughout life. The study of the interdependence of parents and children across the life course has only been looked at in a handful of articles with scholars such as Elizabeth Foyster and Joanne Bailey showing that parents and children continued to share experiences and influence each other's lives and identities.<sup>61</sup> Ben-Amos stresses that reciprocal interactions were often unequal and parents put a much larger investment into their children than they could expect in return.<sup>62</sup> This is certainly the case when considering families in this period and up to the present day, and challenges contemporary ideas which portrayed the parent-child relationship in terms of obligations and unconditional giving culminating in the eighteenth century in a new vocabulary stressing affection and sentiment in the family.<sup>63</sup> However, when considering the parent-child relationship from the perspective of the family life cycle, it is evident that parents provided an example to their children about how they should go on to parent in the future. The gifts and investment given by parents was a necessary part of parenthood which children absorbed and went on to imitate when they became parents themselves, often with the help of their own parents who also cared for grandchildren. The passing down of established parental practices was an important, although often overlooked, aspect of education, one that becomes apparent when considering the implications of family life cycle alongside the individual life cycle. Indeed, this reciprocity between parents and children can only be fully understood if one considers how the relationship changed and evolved through different life stages, experienced by the individual and the family as a whole.

This thesis demonstrates that crisis points were often caused by overlapping stages of the individual life cycle; for example how an adolescent child interacted with adult parents, and how an adult child interacted with elderly parents. It also illustrates how concerns and aims of the individual could be at odds with the wider aims of the family in its own life cycle, for example clandestine marriages which satisfied the desires

---

<sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, 'Parenting Was for Life, Not Just for Childhood: The Role of Parents in the Married Lives of their Children in Early Modern England', *History*, vol. 86 (2001), p. 313 – 27; Joanne Bailey, 'The "Afterlife" of Parenting: Memory, Parentage, and Personal identity in Britain c. 1760 – 1830', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 35 (2010), pp. 249 – 70; Ben-Amos, 'Human Bonding: Parents and their offspring in early modern England', *University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, no. 17 (1997), pp. 1 – 26; Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal Bonding', pp. 291 – 312; Linda A. Pollock, 'Parent-Child Relations', in *The History of the European Family: Volume 1, Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500 – 1789*, eds. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 191 – 220.

<sup>62</sup> Ben-Amos, 'Human Bonding', p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal Bonding', p. 305.

of an individual but did not enhance the prospects of the family as a whole. In this regard, care must be taken when applying frameworks of the family life cycle to the long sixteenth century. When considering nineteenth and twentieth century families Gillies et al., suggest that the family life course could be viewed as a set of individual life courses combining.<sup>64</sup> However, as this thesis shows, family reputation was crucial to the progress and survival of late medieval and early modern families. Although this thesis argues that many crisis points in family life were caused by individual family members acting against the goals of the wider family, it is not appropriate to understand the family life cycle as a convergence of individual life cycles. In this period, the family as a whole had an enhanced significance to the survival and success of individuals who had a stake in ensuring its success. As acknowledged by Hareven, many decisions which are today considered 'individual' like starting work or getting married, were part of collective family strategies.<sup>65</sup>

Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes argue in their comprehensive study of gentry life that the continuation of lineage was the 'defining characteristic' of these families and that structural considerations affected the decision making of all individuals.<sup>66</sup> This can also be seen in aristocratic families where the reputation of a family and dynasty and its survival was of utmost importance. Slater's analysis of the seventeenth-century Verney family leads her to conclude that the family was tied together by a universal understanding of the importance of continuing the dynasty through primogenital inheritance, not through affective bonds.<sup>67</sup> However, subsequent scholars, such as O'Day have argued that this 'lineage principle' also governed family feeling.<sup>68</sup> This thesis argues that these principles were indeed important and demonstrates that strong emotions can be seen, particularly when family members did not adhere to them. It is difficult to separate the ideals and principles governing family life and the emotions that members felt when promoting or rejecting them. Affective bonds did not exist in spite of the 'lineage principle' but were a method of ensuring it was adhered to. Heal and Holmes recognise that these values and concerns could be the cause of family breakdowns and it is these periods of crisis that this thesis explores in depth, showing that family status was a significant factor in the personal

---

<sup>64</sup> Val Gilles, Janet Holland and Jane Ribbens McCarthy, 'Past/Present/Future: Time and the Meaning of Change in the "Family"' in *Social Relations and the Life Course*, eds. Graham Allen and Gill Jones (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Hareven, *Families, History and Social Change*, p. 14.

<sup>66</sup> Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500 – 1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century* pp. 139 – 40.

<sup>68</sup> O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships* p. 127.

authority and decision-making of an individual.<sup>69</sup> Some of the biggest crises for an individual occurred when choices which would benefit their personal lives would be of detriment to their family. Individuals often found themselves in situations where they had to weigh up the consequences for themselves, their own immediate families, and their wider family when making decisions about marriage, remarriage, inheritance disputes, and other financial matters.

As this thesis shows, different relations had different statuses within the family and conflict between parents and children was often caused by changing power and authority, even when children no longer lived within their parents' household. In fact, separation could exacerbate tension and highlight inequalities in power relationships as children were expected to act in a subordinate position to a parent, regardless of their own age and life cycle stage. Nicola Clark has explored the disputes which occurred between members of the Howard family in the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>70</sup> Aside from her aim to expand our understanding of a particular family, her thesis also adds to our understanding of female and familial involvement in a wider political sphere. She shows that, while a family like the Howards could unite over a single family strategy, individuals and the relationships between individuals could jeopardise this and create internal conflict. Similarly, the research presented here considers the idea of collective family strategy but, in addition, focuses on the internal workings of families and how they negotiated authority within patriarchal family structures of the time. A life course perspective is useful to this approach as it considers the devising of family strategies as a dynamic process.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, this thesis is able to look more closely at the emotions and experiences of maintaining and adapting to change within family life, particularly at moments of crisis which were faced by many families in this period, like disputed marriage contracts or inheritance, as opposed to only those connected with high politics. In these moments of tension, parents and children expressed a varied range of emotions which often attested to the levels of affection and love they shared. These will be examined throughout the thesis, which provides a new perspective on family life, and adds to the field of the History of Emotions, by considering how crisis could challenge and therefore expose the bonds and connections between parents and children, allowing us to see them more clearly.

## Sources and methodology

---

<sup>69</sup> Heal and Holmes, p. 81.

<sup>70</sup> Clark, 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family...'.

<sup>71</sup> Hareven, *Families, History and Social Change*, p. 78.



The families which make up the main case studies in the thesis come from across the period c. 1450 – c.1620, where possible with sources from several generations, and contain various types of family structure and experience. Sources which cover several decades before and after the Reformation are examined ensuring that the effects of the Reformation on society can be analysed and compared with the preceding period. A focus on the long sixteenth century allows us to compare and contrast families over several generations but also consider this period in some detail. Thus, it is not feasible to extend the analysis into the mid seventeenth century when other political upheavals affected family life. Case studies of the Paston, Lisle, Thynne, Sidney, and Talbot/Cavendish families have been chosen because their family papers all contain well-documented episodes of crisis in family life, for example, clandestine marriages, intestate deaths, or remarriages. Issues of manageability have determined this approach as it is not possible to do a systematic study of all family papers over the selected period. This thesis uses a case-study approach which compares archival material from different families and synthesises work done on some more well-known collections to draw out wider conclusions. It focuses on letters as material and communicative spaces where authority was negotiated during times of separation, a fact that characterised family life in this period, and as evidence of emotional expression at times of crisis. Diaries of family members are consulted where they exist but, as there are few surviving diaries from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, letters are the more abundant surviving personal document, and provide a window on the immediate responses of individuals to crisis points.

Miriam Slater's influential study of the seventeenth-century Verney family offers a rigorous methodological framework for this type of approach. She argues that using letters allows the historian to reconstruct the process of living, although it is often necessary to supplement these documents with genealogical information and sources that offer points of view of those not directly represented by the correspondence.<sup>72</sup> The extensive bodies of correspondence that survive from these families provide an insight into the lived experience of family tensions and the strategies they developed to deal with problems. Their experiences are supported with evidence from other, smaller collections including the Herrick, Gawdy, and Oxenden families. Although each family had its own distinct structure, was affected by different events and ultimately, was composed of members with individual personalities, the crisis points considered were events that commonly affected

---

<sup>72</sup> Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 2 – 3.

aristocratic and gentry families and their letters are a documented response to these challenges. They are not exceptional in that they went through these crisis points, but that the sources documenting them have survived in substantial numbers. Even though many of these families have been the subjects of microhistories or single-family studies, bringing together examples from these families, often studied in isolation, allows wider trends and experiences to be drawn out.<sup>73</sup> Single-family studies are useful in providing an in-depth consideration of the working of one family but this thesis draws together the experiences of families to assess common practices of parenting and experiences of family life. Each family was connected with the royal court and shared similar aims and concerns for the development and advancement of their families and individual careers. Research into this social group is useful in expanding our understanding of late medieval and early modern England and the experience of family life. In some respects the aristocracy and gentry were a distinctive group in society; they had access to formal education, more resources, worked in different professions, and had some different concerns to those with less money and social status. However, when looking at close family relationships, many ideals and values were shared across society. Although, for example, there was more at stake for the nobility when considering a suitable marriage partner for one's child in terms of transferring money and land, nevertheless, the concerns of safeguarding your child's future and preparing them for it were shared. Historians have considered changes in the aristocratic classes across the early modern period but usually in terms of their political role. This research adds a new dimension to our understanding of this social class by focusing on the family life of the aristocracy and

---

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Winchester, *Tudor Family Portrait* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1955); Norman Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, vols 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Muriel St. Clare Byrne (ed.) *The Lisle Letters*, vols 1 – 6 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Alison Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne 1575 – 1611* (Wiltshire Record Society: vol. 38, 1983); Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London: Routledge, 1984); Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995); Christine Carpenter (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290 – 1483* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Joan Kirby (ed.), *The Plumpton Letters and Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan (eds.), *Domestic Politics and Family Absence: The correspondence (1588 – 1621) of Robert Sidney, First Earl of Leicester, and Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c. 1550 – 1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013), accessed June 2015, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org>

gentry.<sup>74</sup> Comparing the experience of families across this long time period also highlights continuities in the importance of family to individuals and the obligations and responsibilities parents and children had for each other. Although this period saw significant political and religious change, as will be discussed below, by bringing together examples from families across the late medieval and early modern period much continuity can be observed.

Letters were usually preserved in family archives for business or legal matters. Documents that referenced legal cases, land disputes and marriage contracts were seen as particularly worth keeping, in case of any future disagreements or clarification needs.<sup>75</sup> This means that many letters, probably those which would have been most useful to the social historian, have been lost. Christine Carpenter appropriately describes surviving fifteenth-century letter collections as ‘the tip of a lost iceberg.’<sup>76</sup> Those letters which only referred to family matters or the daily lives of children and other relatives were probably not kept as they were not deemed important for any other purpose. There are some indications of this: for example, Margaret Paston wrote the most letters of any Paston family member, but few letters addressed to her survive. It is unlikely that those she addressed never wrote back to her; her more trivial letters may not have been deemed worthy of preservation, or she may not have been particularly diligent at keeping her incoming correspondence. This is problematic in a study such as this where some correspondence has to be assumed; however, there is nothing to suggest that letters, for example, containing news of children or a general update from a parent or grandparent did not exist. The daily lives of families are not usually found in written sources, excluding household accounts which give an idea of food consumption and expenses. We also need to consider the possibility that some letters survive precisely because of the emotional situation they represented. Sometimes the fact of a letter’s survival means that it was emotionally significant to its recipient so was kept and preserved. Many letter collections contain letters that appear to serve no business or legal purpose, for example letters from wives telling their husbands they miss them, or letters from children to their parents in their first weeks living away from home. Again, individual record-keeping must be taken into account, for example, Barbara Sidney preserved all the letters sent by her husband when he was

---

<sup>74</sup> Ronald G. Asch, *Nobilities in Transition, 1550 – 1700: courtiers and rebels in Britain and Europe* (London: Arnold, 2003).

<sup>75</sup> The Lisle papers are an exception as the family archive was seized by the government in its entirety.

<sup>76</sup> Carpenter, *Kingsford’s Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290 – 1483*, p. 8.

working abroad, although he kept none of hers. The content of his letters suggests that he valued their correspondence greatly when isolated from his family so speculation that he did not keep his wife's letters because of a lack of emotion attached to them seems unfounded, however, that she retained all of his does strongly suggest an attachment to these objects through which she conducted her marital relationship over many years.

In recent years, historians have increasingly devoted attention to early modern letter writing conventions and how this should influence our reading of these sources.<sup>77</sup> Particularly in the large body of research that now exists on women's letter-writing in this period, various features of the composition of correspondence have been identified and analysed.<sup>78</sup> James Daybell's recent book focuses on the materiality of the early modern letter, providing a new methodology for the study of early modern correspondence which takes into account the 'social materiality' of these sources.<sup>79</sup> His work shows that social signs and indicators of differing status between letter writers can only be observed through the materiality of the letters themselves. Although Daybell argues for the flexible nature of composition, he stresses how much the process of producing letters was influenced by social codes and protocols. The concept of the 'personal' letter has been challenged by these discoveries, particularly when considering letters written by women. Women's literacy in this period was lower than men's and, certainly in the late medieval period, it is likely that many, even well-educated women, would not have been able to write their own

---

<sup>77</sup> The rhetorical aspects of correspondence used to develop humanist skills have been analysed through a socio-cultural approach in Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500 – 1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005); and recently through a linguistic analysis in Graham Williams, *Women's Epistolary Utterance: A Study of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575 – 1611* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013).

<sup>78</sup> Earlier work, for example Norman Davis, 'The Litera Troili and English Letters', *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 16 (1965), pp. 233 – 44, and 'Style and Stereotype in Early English Letters', *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 1 (1967), pp. 7 – 18, are comprehensive overviews of letter writing conventions in the late Middle Ages which have now been supplemented by an increase in interest in women's letter-writing: Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb, 'Form and Persuasion in Women's Letters, 1400 – 1700', in *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700*, eds. Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 3 – 18; James Daybell, 'Medieval Women's Letters, 1350 – 1500', in Diane Watt (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing: Volume 1, 700 – 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 178-186; James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450 – 1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); V. M. O'Mara, 'Female Scribal Ability and Scribal Activity in Late Medieval England: The Evidence?', *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 27 (1996), pp. 87 – 130.

<sup>79</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, p. 10; This methodology can also be seen in practice in Felicity Maxwell, 'Household Worlds: Textualising Social Relations in the Correspondence of Bess of Hardwick's Servants, c. 1550 – 1590' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Glasgow University, 2014)

correspondence.<sup>80</sup> Karen Robertson questions the usefulness of women's letters as a source for the sixteenth and seventeenth century because, although they give some suggestions of connections they, 'tend to have somewhat restricted purposes and are often written to men, usually those with greater power in the patronage network.'<sup>81</sup> However, many have argued persuasively that women's voices are still evident in these letters but their arguments act as a warning to those looking for the feelings and emotions of individuals through letters which may have had input from others.<sup>82</sup> Caroline Bowden states that it is methodologically important that women wrote or signed their letters, otherwise we cannot know if they were active participants. However, that many (men and women) used scribes to write their letters does not necessarily invalidate the contents.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the choice of scribe is often illuminating about family dynamics. Women who primarily used scribes to write their letters often chose to use a family member. Margaret Paston regularly had her sons write her letters and there is evidence that she collaborated with them on the dictation and editing of several letters relating to family business. This thesis considers how families responded to crisis points in the life cycle and this type of composition adds to our understanding of how family members worked together over different issues. Far from obscuring the emotions and actions of individuals, this type of letter-writing can illuminate their strategies for maintaining and solidifying relationships. Diane Watt acknowledges the collaborative nature of composition for the Paston women, but men also wrote collaboratively in this period.<sup>84</sup> Children collaborated with tutors to write letters home from university and their missives were likely read by the entire family, not just the father or mother to which it was addressed. This also indicates that their news was intended to be shared as a way of maintaining a family bond, even though one member was absent. By utilising

---

<sup>80</sup> Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries...' analyses women's levels of education by putting them into categories and shows the variation of levels of education even among wealthy, upper-class families.

<sup>81</sup> Karen Robertson, 'Tracing Women's Connections from a Letter by Elizabeth Raleigh', in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England*, eds. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 149.

<sup>82</sup> Diane Watt, "'No Writing for Writing's Sake': The Language of Service and Household Rhetoric in the Letters of the Paston Women", in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) pp. 122 – 38. Alternative modes of female expression have been looked at, for example, textualities including embroidery in Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Caroline Bowden, 'Woman as intermediaries: an example of the use of literacy in the last sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', *History of Education*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993) pp. 215 – 16.

<sup>84</sup> Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 154 – 55.

Daybell's new methodological approach to correspondence, this thesis will analyse both the content and material features of letters but argues that the collaborative nature of composing, sending and receiving letters in this period does not obscure personal emotions and affective relationships. If anything, these factors can often add to our understanding of family life.

New research into material culture and the study of objects has enhanced our understanding of everyday life in the middle ages and early modern period.<sup>85</sup> Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson's collection of essays on 'everyday objects' has made a crucial contribution to link social history and material culture. They define objects as possessions that people owned and used and that shaped their everyday existence. This thesis argues that letters themselves, although they were not 'owned', do fit into the category of 'everyday objects'. As well as conveying information, they also enabled the transmission of a wide range of emotions. They are read as emotional objects through which families negotiated times of tension using both words and material additions. Gary Schneider shows that the pleasure at composing and receiving letters was inherent in the idea of the early modern letter so their exchange was a way of expressing emotions as part of an epistolary rhetoric which maintained the genuine sentiments conveyed.<sup>86</sup> This thesis locates letters in their emotional spaces and considers the states of mind that might have led people to write and to keep, even treasure, them at particular moments in the life cycle.<sup>87</sup> Letters were crucially important objects in revealing and negotiating life-changing events and situations as well as organising everyday life, especially for elite families that were often separated by long distances and for extended periods of time. The letters themselves can be objects which represent major life cycle transition points. With letters, it is important to remember the emotions people would have felt on writing and receiving them as the process of their construction, which has this implication for understanding.<sup>88</sup> As Schneider argues, letters could both play a part in representing face-to-face contact by various means including referencing physical presence and orality, but also acted as a means of creating a 'social buffer' when

---

<sup>85</sup> Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>86</sup> Gary Schneider, 'Affecting correspondences: Body, behaviour, and the Textualisation of emotion in early modern English letters', *Prose Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2000), pp. 56 – 57.

<sup>87</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 15.

<sup>88</sup> Ulinka Rublack, 'Matter in the Material Renaissance', *Past and Present*, vol. 219 (2013), p. 43.

expressing negative emotions.<sup>89</sup> Our reading of these sources must take into account the emotional states of the sender and recipient in order to fully understand them.

This thesis aims to look at the emotional relationships of parents and children throughout life and as a form of communication primarily between adults, letters are particularly useful for this. Families were more likely to write to each other when important events were affecting them, and particularly when families were separated. As well as other crisis points like death or a clandestine marriage, the very state of separation could be a point of crisis in itself. Houlbrooke's research on family life through diaries notes that, 'Separation helped to create in diarists either a need for a confidence to share their preoccupations or the sense that their experiences were out of the ordinary and worth recording.'<sup>90</sup> The same could be said of letter writing; separation created a need for families to remain in contact and share experiences. O'Day cautions that, because periods of crisis often generated letters, there is a risk that historians might over-emphasise their importance and perhaps assume that these states of conflict were constant, rather than altering according to circumstance.<sup>91</sup> The research in this thesis explicitly deals with the changing nature of parent-child relationships and so addresses this concern by following family members throughout the life cycle as they were affected by different crisis points. It is important to consider these moments as, although families did not (usually) live in a constant state of tension, these episodes were extremely important in influencing how families operated in the future and how authority passed between different members. After periods of tension had passed, the disagreements and compromises that had been made as part of these episodes impacted on how the family operated in the everyday.

The emotional experience and social practice of parenting can be gathered from letters which show us the immediate reaction and response during times of crisis and they offer an important contrast to more anonymous and formulaic legal records. However this study also uses these sources to supplement family correspondence and add more detail to the lives of these families. Wills are useful documents in showing the state of family relationships at the time of an individual's death. Records from the Court of Wards and Liveries, and Court of Chancery provide evidence for

---

<sup>89</sup> Schneider, 'Affecting correspondences', p. 49.

<sup>90</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters' in *Women's Letter Writing*, ed. Daybell, p. 129.

how family disputes were mediated by the legal system and contain some information about how authority within families was contested, mainly over issues of inheritance and land ownership.<sup>92</sup> The buying and selling of wardships after the death of a parent had a significant impact on a child's future and records usually contain details about the relationship to their surviving parent, their mother. Inheritance disputes cover a wide-range of family tensions including disputes between brothers and sisters, widowed parents and their children, and step-relations of varying kinds. These sources all relate to the discussions of how death and remarriage affected family life which will be discussed further in chapters three and four.

Another type of source examined in this thesis is printed conduct literature. The publication of household advice manuals increased in the second half of the sixteenth century including the work of John Stockwood, a Puritan writer and schoolmaster with the patronage of the Sidney family, and one of the most popular household manuals, William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties*, which was published in the early seventeenth century.<sup>93</sup> Although the majority of these texts were written by Protestant clergyman, historians have identified continuity in the representations of family life found in late medieval and pre-Reformation texts.<sup>94</sup> Their works often focused on giving advice to different groups of people on how to live their lives, including advice on parenting and ideas about the way parents and children should relate to one another. Stockwood stated that, 'Children are not at their owne libertie, & disposition, not (as they say) their owne-men, but vnder the authority and power of their parentes, like as seruantes are at the disposing of their maisters', although also acknowledged that parents should not behave tyrannically towards their

---

<sup>92</sup> W. J. Jones, *The Elizabethan Court of Chancery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); Dorian Gerhold, *Courts of Equity: A Guide to Chancery and other Legal Records for Local and Family Historians* (Newport: Pinhorns, 1994); J. Hurstfield, 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', *History Today*, vol. 4 (1954), pp. 605 – 12; H. E. Bell, *An Introduction to the History and Records of the Court of Wards and Liveries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953) are useful overviews of the working of the sixteenth century courts and their relevance for family matters. Also, Emma Hawkes, "[S]he will...protect and defend her rights boldly by law and reason...": Women's Knowledge of Common Law and Equity Courts in Late-Medieval England', in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Noel James Menuge (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000) pp. 145 – 61.

<sup>93</sup> John Stockwood, *A Bartholomew Fairing for Parentes, to bestow vpon their sonnes and daughters, and for one friend to giue vnto another: Shewing that children are not to marie, without the consent of their parentes, in whose power and choise it lieth to provide wiues and husbandes for their sonnes and daughters* (London: 1589); Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622).

<sup>94</sup> Eales, *Women in early modern England*, p. 5; Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', p. 60.



children.<sup>95</sup> This was a common way of considering the authority of parents and children in all conduct manuals. Most sixteenth-century conduct literature was written by men and upheld patriarchal values in society by making clear associations with women and the ideal moral values of obedience and restraint that they should uphold.<sup>96</sup> Some have argued that the texts are not representative of the experience of family life with Alison Wall suggesting that they represent the anxieties of only a small group of Puritan clergymen.<sup>97</sup> The popular and widely-read *Christian Oeconomie* by Puritan theologian William Perkins is an example of this type of literature, first translated into English to reach a wider audience in 1609.<sup>98</sup> Perkins placed great importance on the authority of parents, particularly fathers. This was a common theme in the large number of Puritan conduct manuals which emerged in the late sixteenth century, mostly written by clergyman with an interest in reforming the Church and promoting Protestant morality. Research on this issue largely focuses on these emerging middle classes and their values which came to dominate society in later periods. This thesis shows that, when looking at aristocratic families, idealised discourses of Protestant family life from the emerging middling sorts did not have a significant impact. Considering Protestant conduct literature against the letters and documents of these families suggests that the ideal of family life promoted by Protestant preachers may have taken some time to fully influence the general population of sixteenth-century England.

Although most did come from a group of writers linked by Puritan values, these books were popular so must have had some appeal to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers. Kathleen Davies suggests that these texts can be viewed as descriptive, rather than prescriptive, and in part their popularity can be explained by the fact that they reflected the lives of their readers.<sup>99</sup> She argues that they were aimed at the expanding group of urban bourgeoisie and probably had little effect on the aristocratic classes. Bowden agrees that, although they may have helped form a 'climate of opinion' and be used for discussion, the observable discrepancy between their advice and the reality of family life negates any claims of further

---

<sup>95</sup> Stockwood, *A Bartholomew Fairing for Parentes* (1589), p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 2; Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: Arnold, 1995).

<sup>97</sup> Wall, *Power and Protest*, p. 83.

<sup>98</sup> M. W. Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie: or, a short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie, according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London, 1609).

<sup>99</sup> Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', pp. 76 – 77.

influence.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, they certainly upheld an ideal of family behaviour and comparing this 'climate of opinion' on how families should conduct themselves with personal source material showing how families did this in practice, allows us to examine the differences between society's ideals and the lived experience of late medieval and early modern family life.<sup>101</sup>

The time period chosen for this thesis, c.1450 – c.1620, provides an insight into change and continuity over this period, also drawing on work done by medieval family historians. By referring to the 'long sixteenth century' this thesis explores aspects of family life across a period marked by religious and political upheaval. Understanding of family structure and experience in this period of English history provides insight into wider political and religious culture, specifically the behaviour of aristocratic families around the Reformation. Considering the letters and legal documents of families before and after the Reformation adds to our understanding of its impact on English people, specifically the elite classes, many of whom were at the forefront of these political and religious debates.<sup>102</sup> This research compares experiences by families living through this period, too often used as a cut-off point or artificial watershed to distinguish between medieval and early modern history and shows that there were continuities in everyday life, despite the religious changes affecting England. Although the Reformation may have signalled important changes in England's political climate, social trends in issues of marriage and the family do not always directly reflect these, while changes mainly occurred in family piety and religious worship. Protestantism attempted to standardise and categorise the family in strict patriarchal terms. However, this did not change the flexible nature of family roles and the way authority was wielded in times of crisis, particularly for the elite who were more concerned with the promotion and wealth of their dynasties. Although religion was a part of this, their religious identity did not fundamentally change the way their family life operated. Patricia Crawford argues that change in the status of women following the Reformation should not be exaggerated, as

---

<sup>100</sup> Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries...', pp. 67 – 68.

<sup>101</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 80 – 92.

<sup>102</sup> Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England: 1500 – 1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Andrew Pettegree, (ed.), *The Reformation World* (London: Routledge, 2000); Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Harvard University Press, 1985); Merry E. Wiesner, 'Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1987), pp. 311 – 21.

Protestant conduct literature advocated patriarchal authority and encouraged a separation of men and women into public and domestic spheres.<sup>103</sup> Jacqueline Eales questions this source material as representative of the actual lives of women and argues that one over-arching theory of change or continuity cannot explain the experiences of all types of women.<sup>104</sup> The 'specific impact on women' she identifies is a new understanding of patriarchal authority where women could legitimately challenge a church, state or husband who differed in religious belief.<sup>105</sup> However this argument still does not demonstrate a significant change in women's everyday experience of gender and patriarchal authority.

Eamon Duffy, Christopher Haigh and Peter Marshall, among others, have presented revisionist arguments that England went through a complex period of religious reform which did not necessarily result in a huge lifestyle change for most people.<sup>106</sup> Historians focusing on aspects of family life in the sixteenth century have also identified areas of continuity including reliance on church courts to solve family issues, commissioning and purchasing religious art in the home, and stability in illegitimacy rates.<sup>107</sup> Changes that did occur can often be attributed to other factors, for example the rise of capitalism.<sup>108</sup> This revisionist view of the Reformation, states that, particularly in England with its extended and less defined period of religious change, a country's change of religion did not necessarily signal an all-encompassing revolution in the way society operated. Families often had strong religious identities and their religion certainly affected the decisions and alliances

---

<sup>103</sup> Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion*, pp. 36 – 41; Anthony Fletcher, 'Men's dilemma: the future of patriarchy in England 1560 – 1660', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, vol. 4 (1994), p. 73.

<sup>104</sup> Eales, *Women in early modern England*, p. 15.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111 – 12.

<sup>106</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400 – 1580* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation, 1500 – 1800* (London: Routledge, 1998); Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480 – 1642* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003).

<sup>107</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520 – 1570* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1979); Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2010); Richard Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); Others have pointed out that England was unique in its continuity of legislation concerning marriage: Goody, *The Development of the Family*, p. 152; Jeffrey R. Watt, 'The Impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation', *The History of the European Family: Volume 1, Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500 – 1789*, eds. David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 125 – 54; Eric Josef Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 8.

<sup>108</sup> Susan C. Karant-Nunn, 'Reformation Society, Women and the Family', in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree, p. 457.

they made.<sup>109</sup> Many individuals went into exile at different periods and families maintained and strengthened allegiances with other families of similar religious beliefs to themselves. Alec Ryrie considers how Protestantism was experienced by individuals at different stages across the life course and makes a significant contribution to the study of religion and the individual. However, considering families as a whole and their aims and obligations offers a different perspective. This thesis shows that, although acting within their religious confessions, parents made similar choices for their children by educating them, arranging their marriages and providing support to them as adults. The position of mothers and daughters in these families was dependent on factors such as age and personality but women continued to be effective in acting as dominant figures in families which were not yet separated into 'private' and 'public' spheres. For the elite classes, family reputation was crucial in forging their reputations and economic success, and this was only gradually affected by Protestant ideals which strengthened patriarchal authority and contributed to middle class values about gender and family. This thesis shows that the concerns of aristocratic parents were shared across religious confessions and, although religion played a part in the decision-making of individuals (for example which families they chose to marry into, where they sent their children to be educated, and if they went into exile under different regimes) it did not affect the fundamental organisation of power within the family and the negotiation of relationships.

The families analysed in this thesis have been chosen because of the large amount of personal source material that has survived in their archives. This enables a deeper understanding of the emotional lives of these families and, supplemented with legal records, gives us a full picture of their lives. As shown, these sources have various factors to be considered including the indicators of social status found in their material aspects, and the consideration of collaboration in the production of the, seemingly individual, texts. However, this thesis takes a new angle on this debate by exploring collaboration as an indicator of family relationships and strategy, rather than an obscurer of individual voices. A comparison of the experience of operating within these families and the ideals of family life presented in contemporary literature means that their experiences can be situated within debates on the ideals and values of late medieval and early modern society.

## Structure

---

<sup>109</sup> Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The first chapter deals with education, particularly the initial separation of parents and children which usually took place during a child's adolescence. The initial separation of a child from its parents was the first moment in the life cycle where a child began to have some independence and agency over their own everyday lives. This was a period of transition for both parents and children who had to adapt to this increased independence. While children who were away being educated in different households or at university had adult supervision, their parents still tried to keep some authority over them, something that required more effort as children aged. The chapter discusses the strategies employed by parents to continue parenting their adolescent offspring in the form of advice letters and surrogate parental figures employed to act for them. It then shows that this period was often the first instance of tension within the relationship as children challenged their parents' authority and attempted to make decisions independently. This negotiation of authority could continue into the adult life of the child. However, the reciprocity in the parent-child relationship also began to emerge when children finished their education and embarked on their adult lives. Parents continued to offer emotional and financial support, but children also began to provide support in return by utilising the contacts they had made through their education to widen and strengthen family network ties.

The rite of passage which for many historians has signalled the full transition to adulthood in the sixteenth century is marriage. Marriage was the start of a new family life cycle as children established new families away from their parental home. The involvement of parents in the arrangement of marriage and beyond is the focus of the second chapter. Conduct literature of the period shows that marriage arrangements were seen, ideally, as a balance between the wishes of parents and children. Although parents had the ultimate authority and decision-making power over their offspring's marriage, they were expected to take the child's wishes into account. Marriage could become a point of crisis for a family when this balance was not found and parents or children arranged marriages without agreement. The chapter explores some case studies where the parent-child relationship was challenged over this important moment in both the individual and family life cycle, particularly when children asserted independence over their choice of partner against their parents' wishes. These cases signal a shift in the parent-child relationship where authority was increasingly held by the child who was capable of making independent decisions. It also considers how far parents were involved in the lives of their children after they were married. Although marriage signalled the beginning of adult life and a new family for the child, it was often the case that parents

were still a crucial part of their children's support networks and influenced their decision-making. The examples presented demonstrate that parenting continued throughout life and the roles of parent and child; although altered as adult children had their own authority over their families and careers, still retained some essential characteristics where parents could expect obedience from their children and had responsibilities to advise and provide for them. This extended to the next generation as parents often cared for grandchildren and acted as surrogate parental figures to assist their children when they became parents themselves.

Another crisis point in family life was the death of a parent, particularly a father who, as head of the family, had financial and social responsibility for his family members. Chapter three discusses the impact of the death of a parent on the relationship between children and their remaining parent. This moment in the individual life cycle was one where children, particularly eldest sons, were expected to take on responsibility for their families. However, they could still be in the subordinate role of 'child' if they still had one living parent. The conflicts between widowed mothers and their eldest sons are particularly illuminating in showing how authority in the family was managed at this time. Again, much importance rested in the balancing of authority between a parent and child, both of whom were adults with the ability and experience to make their own decisions. Examples of families at this time show that parents and children could come into conflict over issues of finance and care of family business interests, and the provision of younger children/siblings. This crisis point highlights the fluidity in family roles where an eldest son could take on the role of son, father or brother to different members of his family at the same time. Similarly, widowed mothers enjoyed independence as they became legally recognised in their own right on top of their status as parent, but their gender and place in the patriarchal structure of aristocratic families meant that their children had the authority to make decisions which they had not advised or did not agree with. This chapter also discusses instances where widowed parents required more support from their children, highlighting the reciprocity in parent-child relationships as parents aged and children were required to provide a supportive role.

Although death marks the end of the individual life cycle, it did not end the family life cycle. The survival of one parent meant that the parent-child relationship continued, albeit in a different form as the remaining parent renegotiated their relationship with, and authority over, their children. The family could continue after the death of a parent and indeed, new families could emerge. The final chapter argues that remarriage is an important, but often overlooked, stage in the family life cycle and

could have profound effects on the relationships of remarried parents with their children. As with a first marriage, a remarriage founded a new family. However, parents who had been married before still had responsibilities for the children from their previous families. This overlap of families at different stages in the family life cycle is crucial when looking at how parent-child relationships altered or endured over the course of life. The chapter explores how the lives of parents and children were affected by remarriage and what impact a new parental figure could have on the life of a child. It also looks at the emotional bonds between families and ask how far stepfamilies were considered one entity. The scarcity of use of the term 'step' to describe relations suggests that families brought together by marriage were as important as any other family member but the dynamics of these relationships have rarely been explored. This final chapter looks at how the parent-child relationship was changed by this upheaval in family life.

## **Chapter One - Education**

Throughout the long sixteenth century, it was common practice for aristocratic families to send their sons to university at Oxford or Cambridge from the age of around fourteen, and to send their daughters into service in other aristocratic households. Parents believed that their children needed education and experiences away from their immediate family as the best way to ensure they learnt all they needed to know for their adult lives. They did not send their children away because they did not care for them. Katherine Paston's letter to her fourteen-year-old son William in his first term at Cambridge explains her motives in sending him away and captures the emotional wrench:

I confes I coolde haue bine content, and I shold haue pleased my self for the present much better, to haue kepte the allwas at hom with me: but how could that haue bine for thy good in time to come: no, I beleue verily it might haue bine to bothe our disparagements: but now I hope to receue the to me furnished with grassces, as a bee coms loden to her hiue.<sup>1</sup>

Although many letters between parents and children in this period were influenced by formal structures appropriate to the power structures in the family where parents had authority over obedient children, letter such as this one demonstrate the more uninhibited descriptions of emotional states that can be found. This chapter explores the parental aspirations and intentions behind the education of adolescent children. It shows that the concept of 'socialisation' was crucial to late medieval and early modern education and that parents relied on the support of others to ensure a rounded education for their children. Relationships with kin were crucial for aristocratic education and parents relied on the support of their networks. The chapter considers the different roles assumed by mothers and fathers; the extent to which obligations of parental care meant that many continued to provide advice and guidance even when children had entered into adult life; and the use of letters to give this advice from a distance. Although perhaps not a point of crisis where relationships between parents and children broke down, adolescence could be the first stage of the life cycle where authority began to shift and the parent-child relationship had to be renegotiated. As children began to operate and gain

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Hughey, (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627* (Norfolk Record Society, vol. 14, 1941), p. 72 (25 June 1624); Katherine's body of correspondence is, chronologically, the next largest collection of one Paston family member, following that of her husband's better known fifteenth-century ancestors. Her correspondence preserved in the British Library consists of forty-eight letters from her and thirty-seven addressed to her, mostly from the period 1618 – 27. Katherine and Edmund had two sons, William, born in 1610, and Thomas, in 1614. The largest part of her surviving correspondence is from 1624 – 27, when William was studying at Cambridge.



experiences away from their immediate family, their independence increased as did the potential for conflict between parents and children. Still regarding their offspring as children and following traditional advice about the appropriate obedience of children, parents continued to parent their children from a distance, often with the support of other family members, friends, and employees, while children were increasingly less willing to heed their parents' advice and began to challenge family norms. This often caused tension as parents tried to remain in their dominant role of disciplinarian and advice-giver, while children tried to renegotiate the relationship by asserting their own agency and using their own initiative to achieve their own, individual goals. Advice-giving was an expected parental duty in early modern England but the level of care and the continuation of advice-giving throughout a child's adult life indicate that there was more to this practice than basic duty.

While exploring the responsibilities of parents for their physically distant children, which included ensuring practical support in the form of clothes, bedding textiles and money, as well as advice on religion, healthcare and learning practices, this chapter also considers the different roles assumed by mothers and fathers. Parents often took on different roles in caring for absent children dependent on their gender; however, individual experience and personality also contributed to how a parent and child continued their relationship when apart from one another. The obligations of parental care and responsibility meant that many continued to provide advice and guidance and require obedience from their children, even after they had finished their education and begun their adult lives. As the first stage of the individual life cycle where the authority between parents and children was tested, it is important to consider how the statuses of parent and child changed in meaning after the initial, less problematic stages of infancy and childhood. Ben-Amos's research on early modern adolescence and youth describes two models of thinking about youth in the past: one where youth is a short transition to adulthood with early entry to work, and one which argues for a longer transition towards full adult life.<sup>2</sup> Although some arbitrary transition ages can be found, this chapter shows that Ben-Amos's second description is more apt for the lives of aristocratic and gentry children and supports her assertions that adolescence and youth should be viewed as 'a phase which consisted of a series of mental, social and economic processes' by which children matured, often involving major events like separation from parents and entry into

---

<sup>2</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 8.

and exit from service.<sup>3</sup> Although, even as they grew older, children remained in the status of child, they began to test how far they could act as adults and assert their own agency and authority against their parents. Parents also saw a change in their status as they adapted to consider the needs and responsibilities they had towards their children, and how far they should allow them to develop independence away from the family home.

This chapter will first show that parents had specific aims for the education of their children which were intended to prepare them for their adult lives. As this involved sending children to be educated away from the family home, parents had to fulfil their responsibilities from a distance. The genre of advice literature was a popular one in this period and this chapter will demonstrate how parents used letters to continue to advise and educate their children. That it became a popular print genre in the late sixteenth century is an indication of its popularity and that it resonated with other parents as a crucial part of bringing up a child. However, many similarities can be seen in parental aims for children in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries before this genre became popular. The chapter draws on examples from across the long sixteenth century which show these continuities. The chapter will then examine the lived experience of parents and adolescent children during their first separation, showing that children often began to assert their own authority and challenge that of their parents. This continued into adulthood and the final section will look at how far parents continued to parent adult children showing that many parental responsibilities continued after adolescence, although parents were expected by their children, and by wider society, to acknowledge the authority their children had grown into as adults.

### **Aims and experience of education**

The definition of education in this period can be a wider one than merely the content of lessons at school and university. The growth in popularity of humanist education

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 8 – 9; George Hakewill, *An apologie of the powver and prouidence of God in the gouernment of the world. Or An examination and censure of the common error touching natures perpetuall and vniuersall decay diuided into foure bookes: whereof the first treates of this pretended decay in generall, together with some preparatiues thereunto. The second of the pretended decay of the heauens and elements, together with that of the elementary bodies, man only excepted. The third of the pretended decay of mankind in regard of age and duration, of strength and stature, of arts and wits. The fourth of this pretended decay in matter of manners, together with a large prooffe of the future consummation of the world from the testimony of the gentiles, and the vses which we are to draw from the consideration thereof* (London: 1627, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), states fourteen or fifteen as the age for puberty although acknowledges individual difference. As we saw in the introduction, infancy, youth, and adolescence were common divisions in the ages of man schemes.

in the early sixteenth century meant that the curriculum followed in schools and by private tutors was focused towards the classics and new sciences such as philosophy and theology, but education was about more than which subjects were studied. Scholarship on medieval and early modern education has considered how schools operated and what children learned.<sup>4</sup> Historians have increasingly begun to consider the gendered implications of education and the choices made by parents for their children, for example Kim Phillips's research into the maidenhood stage of women's life.<sup>5</sup> The growth of humanism as a form of education emerged in the sixteenth century but scholars have argued that its impact on early modern education can be overstated.<sup>6</sup> Education, particularly for women, was much more than learning academic subjects and changes in teaching methods did not necessarily change the object of young peoples' education. Children were prepared for their future roles in society both by learning academic subjects and by being given or exposed to useful experiences for adult life.

The aristocratic and gentry classes had developed a method of educating their children to achieve the goal of well-rounded and functioning adults who could continue to run their estates, make profit and influence the governance and running of the country. Clara McMahon's early consideration of fifteenth-century education argued for changes based on the move away from medieval chivalric culture, but research into family letter collections across the period show that the careers of aristocratic and gentry children remained fairly constant.<sup>7</sup> Eldest sons were expected to inherit and manage estates, and provide and educate heirs to inherit in the future. Younger sons had more scope for career choices and needed a wide range of skills to succeed with less money and inherited land than their elder brothers. Women were expected to marry and assist their husbands with their endeavours through

---

<sup>4</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society 1500 – 1800: The social foundations of education in early modern Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1982); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1999); Kim M. Phillips, *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270 – 1540* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, pp. 127, 335; Hilda L. Smith, 'Humanist education and the Renaissance Concept of Woman', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500 – 1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 9 – 29; Gemma Allen, *The Cooke sisters: Education, piety and politics in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) shows that the Cooke sisters received a humanist education to their male peers in the 1530s and 40s but this was unusual and a result of the decision taken by their father to provide them with it. It was certainly not a common parental choice, even for aristocratic girls.

<sup>7</sup> Clara P. McMahon, *Education in Fifteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1947).

household and estate management, and networking skills which involved negotiation and peace-making.<sup>8</sup> To ensure their children were adequately equipped for these purposes, parents had developed educational traditions over the medieval period. Boys and girls were usually educated at home until the age of about seven when boys were sent to continue their education at school or university before being placed into the service or retinue of an important household. Girls rarely continued formal education but were placed into service at a younger age, learning about household management and developing networks in a household apart from their own.<sup>9</sup> Marriage was also a goal of male education as shown in Matthew Griffith's *Bethel: or, a forme for families* (c. 1533) where he stated that children of both sexes should be brought up 'to some calling, and to marriage.'<sup>10</sup> The education of male and female children was important to parents and aristocratic parents usually spent similar amounts of money on the education of the daughters and sons, though they tailored their education by gender, by personality and according to individual family circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

Education was intended as a broad curriculum of enough formal learning and practical skills to allow children to fulfil their roles as adults. Merridee Bailey's recent work focuses on exactly this issue, referring to the socialisation of the child, instead of the education.<sup>12</sup> Although the methods and the perceptions of what was important changed over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this fundamental principle of education remained unchanged. The term socialisation is useful for the issues in this chapter as it refers to moral and practical skills and training as well as academic education. Bailey analyses conduct literature which instructed parents on education and correct upbringing and this chapter will look at conduct literature alongside

---

<sup>8</sup> Barbara J Harris, 'Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of English Aristocratic Women, 1450 – 1550', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450 – 1700*, ed. James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) pp. 21 – 50; Tracy Adams, 'Fostering Girls in Early Modern France', in *Emotions in the Household*, ed. Broomhall, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Pollock, "'Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England", *Continuity and Change*, vol. 4 (1989), pp. 231 – 58, provides a comprehensive look at the expectations of young women. Her article 'Training a child in the way he/she should go.', pp. 79 – 104, also looks at the process and aims of educating early modern children, arguing that education within the home and by parents was the most common method of social transmission before the wider advent of schooling in the nineteenth century.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Griffith, *Bethel: or, a forme for families* (London: 1533), p. 334; Although in *The Office of Christian parents: Shewing how children are to be governed throughout all ages and times of their life* (Cambridge: 1616); the author is nevertheless clear that eldest sons have most need of education and daughters should be educated in terms of the marriage they expect to make.

<sup>11</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England*.

letters between parents and children, which show the lived reality of late medieval and early modern education. William Kempe's 1588 instruction manual gave parents a list of issues over which a father should keep authority over his child, including manners and behaviour, diet, learning, godly behaviour, and humility to superiors.<sup>13</sup> This chapter will show that religious instruction was an important part of a child's education, and that after the Reformation this task was particularly seen as one appropriate for mothers. However, it appears that the aims of educating and socialising children in this period were not connected with religious identities but more practical concerns of how children were to make their way as adults.<sup>14</sup> Bartholomew Batt's instruction manual from a similar time considered the upbringing of both boys and girls, although it offered similar advice for both genders, for example over virtuous behaviour and good manners.<sup>15</sup> These two manuals were part of a genre of advice literature popular from the mid sixteenth-century that offered advice on all aspects of life and were aimed at gentry families, although every social class participated in networks based on social and political structures and goals, underpinned by patrilineal inheritance.<sup>16</sup>

Parents often had strong opinions about how they wanted their children to be educated and what aspects of their instruction were important to them. The Paston family in the fifteenth century were gentry with aspirations of increasing their wealth and status, so for them the successful education of children was crucial. These aspirations and how they were promoted and realised by the parents are explicit in some of their correspondence. John Paston I and his younger brother Edmund were both sent to London for legal training by their parents. Particularly for the heir this was believed to be a practical course of education for a young man who was to inherit substantial estates and property. His mother Agnes wrote to Edmund of her and her late husband's desire for him to gain an education in this area for precisely

---

<sup>13</sup> William Kempe, *The education of children in learning declared by the dignitie, vtilitie, and method thereof. Meete to be knowne, and practised aswell of parents as schoolmaisters* (London: 1588, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England*, p. 198; Kathryn Sather, 'Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Child-Rearing: A Matter of Discipline', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 22 (1989), pp. 735 – 43 also supports this idea, showing similarities in advice presented to both Puritan and Jewish communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She argues for shared social pressures and experiences on these two minority communities which isolated them.

<sup>15</sup> Barthélemy Batt, *The Christian mans closet Wherein is contained a large discourse of the godly training vp of children: as also of those duties that children owe vnto their parents, made dialogue wise, very pleasant to reade, and most profitable to practise, collected in Latin by Bartholomew Batt of Alostensis. And nowe Englished by William Lowth* (London: 1591, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition).

<sup>16</sup> Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England*, p. 194.

this reason in 1445: 'I [...] avyse yow to thynkkw onis of the daie of yowre fadris counseyle to lerne the lawe, for he seyde manie tymis that ho so ever schuld dwelle at Paston schulde have nede to cone defende hym-selfe.'<sup>17</sup> Legal training continued to be a common educational path for gentry boys and younger aristocratic sons well into the sixteenth century, usually in addition to a university education. French language skill became increasingly valued at the English court from the 1530s onwards and Arthur and Honor, Viscount and Viscountess Lisle, responded to this by sending their youngest children James, Anne and Mary to France to be educated to give them this extra skill useful to younger siblings who did not expect to inherit property.<sup>18</sup> Honor's eldest son John received legal training appropriate to his position as his father's heir. The educational decisions made by the Lisles are notable for the extent to which they seem to have taken into account the specific needs and personalities of their children as well as their birth order. Of the younger daughters who were sent to French households, Anne was singled out for a career at the royal court over her eldest sister Katherine suggesting Anne's personality was considered by her parents as more suitable for the position. They chose to keep the elder daughters with them in Calais, networking with important people, to prioritise securing marriages for them. The education of children was part of the wider family strategy and as well as learning useful skills, parents also made sure their children engaged in networking from a young age.

Taking young men and women into service was a significant, although common undertaking. Parents attempted to utilise their connections with higher status families to enhance the education of their children who were brought into them as active participants. Boys often went into service in other households, usually after university and possibly after a period of travel, but it was a rite of passage for most aristocratic girls in this period. Most girls were tutored at home until they were old enough to go into service in another household, away from their family home. A description of the expectations of girls in service can be found in *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague*. Although this posthumous work aimed to portray Magdalen as a saint-like figure, the normal expectations of young women can be seen, explaining that she diligently attended the Countess of Bedford, also acting as

---

<sup>17</sup> Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, p. 27 – 28 (4 February 1445).

<sup>18</sup> This was still the case in the late sixteenth century. In 1597 the Countess of Warwick advised her nephew Robert Sidney to send his eldest son to be educated at the Hague where he could 'learn the French tongue', Michael G. Brennan, Noel J. Kinnamon and Margaret P. Hannay (eds.), *The Letters (1595 – 1608) of Rowland Whyte* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2013), pp. 202 – 04 (18/19 April 1597).

chambermaid on some occasions, attending the Countess day and night.<sup>19</sup> Both Lisle daughters, Anne and Mary, seem to have been greatly valued by the French noblewomen in whose houses they served, acting as friends and companions. In their letters back to Honor, Jeanne de Saveuse, Madame de Riou, and Anne Rouault, Madame de Bours, who looked after the girls, frequently described loving the girls as if they were their own daughters. They expressed sadness that the girls were to leave them, particularly Madame de Bours who wrote:

very sorry I am that the gentlewoman your daughter must depart from me [...] I could not cherish her more tenderly were she my own daughter. I have found her so entirely obedient that it is impossible to express to you the natural goodness of disposition that is in her.<sup>20</sup>

Both French women remained friends with the families and kept in contact with the girls after they had left their households and moved back to England. Hanawalt's work on Honor Lisle and Tracy Adams's research on similar practices in France terms this kind of arrangement as fostering, which in some ways more closely resembles the status of many girls than 'service', which implies that they acted almost as employees.<sup>21</sup> She uses the letters of the Lisle girls as an example of the 'mutual honour' in the arrangement where social ties were made or reinforced, and daughters were trained for their adulthoods.<sup>22</sup> Girls who received this level of care from the women they served were lucky, although not exceptional, and benefitted from an introduction to female networking practices. The Lisles probably met Thybault de Riou and his wife Jeanne during their visit to France in 1532 when accompanying Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn on a diplomatic visit to Francis I. Anne Rouault was the sister of Thybault so both women were known to the Lisles and deemed appropriate guardians for Honor's youngest daughters. In the 1530s, the English court had many links with the French court and women with a French education or experience there, like Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII's sister Mary Tudor, were seen as sophisticated and well-educated and could therefore expect more prestigious marriages. The de Riou and de Bours families had links with the French court and the court of Charles V in the Southern Low Countries. Honor's husband, Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle, was an illegitimate son of Edward VI, and so the

---

<sup>19</sup> Richard Smith, *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague 1538 – 1608*, trans. Cuthbert Fursdon (London: 1627).

<sup>20</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, pp. 211 – 12.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, 'Fostering Girls in Early Modern France', in *Emotions in the Household*, ed. Broomhall, pp. 103 – 08; Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988), p. 193.

<sup>22</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p. 113.

half-uncle of Henry VIII. He had served at court throughout his life and his appointment as Lord Deputy of Calais in 1533 was in recognition of his close relationship to the king. David Potter indicates the similar social profile of the families as 'members of the provincial gentry of middle rank, yet both had connections with the highest in the land and at court' as an explanation for relationships that formed between them.<sup>23</sup> The placement of Anne and Mary in these social circles shows the aspirations the Lisles had for their children, although the political implications of an association with the French court had negative repercussions for the family in later years as the English court sought new alliances after the Break with Rome.<sup>24</sup>

Enabled by their father/step-father's position as Governor of Calais, the Lisle children's access to French education and political networks was unusual even before the Reformation. Aristocratic children from Protestant families in the later sixteenth century would have been much more likely to go into service with a family in England. High-status women commonly took in girls to their households, including childless women like Lady Margaret Hoby.<sup>25</sup> Girls might go into service with a relative as developing a close relationship with higher-status kin was also useful to them. In her childhood, Anne Clifford, later countess of Cumberland, stayed with her aunt, the countess of Warwick, who took her responsibilities to her young niece seriously. Anne recounted in her adult diary that, 'I was much bound for her continual care & love of mee.'<sup>26</sup> She spoke warmly of her aunt so was not 'bound' in a negative way, but benefitted from the support and instruction of her relative. Bridget Manners was also cared for by her aunt who wrote that Bridget was 'bereft' of her mother in the early weeks of her separation, aged eleven.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps it was hoped that for young girls moving to the household of someone known to them would make the initial separation easier, but it was also easier to obtain a placement with someone to whom you were bound by kinship. Requests to take on a girl often came through part of the kin network, for example when Lord Darcy requested that the Countess

---

<sup>23</sup> David Potter, 'The Private Face of Anglo-French Relations in the Sixteenth Century: the Lisles and their French friends', in *The English Experience in France c. 1450 – 1558 War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange*, ed. David Grummitt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 221; for an analysis of Honor Lisle's networks and her ability to assert power in the patriarchal society of early Tudor England also see Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', pp. 188 – 212.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur Lisle's religious conservatism and supposed links to Catholic exiles including Reginald Pole, whether true or not, led to his arrest in 1540.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Moody (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan Lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599 - 1605* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> D. J. H. Clifford (ed.), *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991), p. 21

<sup>27</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 151 (10 July 1583).



of Rutland would take on his sister's daughter.<sup>28</sup> This was also a common practice at court where aristocratic families would attempt to secure places for their daughters in the Queen's bedchamber.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes parents disagreed over aspects of their children's educations. Although these disagreements may have taken place when couples lived in the same house, it seems to have been exacerbated by separation when one parent was absent and could only assert their authority and orders by letter. Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland, does not seem to have been very interested in getting to know his children, writing to the Earl of Salisbury, 'You know that children's conversations are not suitable to my humour', but he did have strong opinions on how his son should be educated.<sup>30</sup> In the same letter he wrote that he intended to 'wean him from his nursery company and his mother's wings' in order to make him 'a fit servant for the king and his country'.<sup>31</sup> He considered that only fathers were capable of making these decisions correctly, a view shared by Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester. He wrote to his wife Barbara with similar sentiments to Henry Percy, albeit in a more conciliatory tone:

For the girls, I cannot mislike the care you take of them: but for the boys, you must resolve to let me have my will. For I know better what belongs to a man than you do. Indeed I will have him lie from his maid, for it is time, and now no more to be in the nursery among women.<sup>32</sup>

This sentiment is also found in the instructional manual *The Boke named the Governour* dating from c. 1531 where Sir Thomas Elyot stated that boys aged seven should be taken from 'the company of women'.<sup>33</sup> Elyot's book was popular and ran through eight editions in the sixteenth century. Its purpose was to describe a suitable programme of education for boys who were to enter the governing classes, so it is likely Sidney would have read this book. As a man with a diplomatic position who had gone through a university education and spent time abroad in his youth, this is presumably what he also aspired to for his sons in the early seventeenth century. When Robert and Barbara's sons, William and Robert, matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, letters show the couple disagreed over their sons' commitment to

---

<sup>28</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 132 (28 Feb 1581/2).

<sup>29</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 211 – 40; Anna Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> CP 127/113 (26 July 1609).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.; G. R. Batho, 'A Difficult Father-in-law: the ninth Earl of Northumberland', *History Today*, vol. 6 (1956), pp. 744 – 51.

<sup>32</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, p. 104 – 05 (20 April 1597).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London: 1531), p. 33.

studies. Robert frequently complained to Barbara that the boys did not return to university quickly enough after visits home, appearing to blame her for their tardiness. In 1607 he wrote to her, 'me thinks you find occasions to stay them still' suggesting a difference in their approach to the boys' study with Barbara preferring to keep her sons close to her and have them educated at home.<sup>34</sup> The replies from Barbara to Robert do not survive, but the side of the disagreement that has been preserved gives an indication as to how these different approaches were negotiated through correspondence. A year later, Robert wrote with similar concerns in two separate letters when it appeared Barbara was not sending the boys back to Oxford quickly enough, as he had ordered, suggesting that the couple did not settle this conflict in parenting decisions.<sup>35</sup> Barbara appears unusual in wanting to keep all her children at home with her throughout their adolescence: she also protested against sending her two eldest daughters into service in their early teens.<sup>36</sup> It is not clear why she was so eager to keep them close to her. She felt the separation from her husband keenly and perhaps relied on the companionship of her eldest children. There are also examples of couples separated through marital difficulty disagreeing over the education of their children, but Robert and Barbara Sidney show that even happily married couples could face these issues.<sup>37</sup> Gender stereotypes and differences contributed to these particular disagreements as fathers felt they had more authority over the education of their sons. However, a simplistic view of early modern families dividing authority exclusively along gendered lines does not take into account the varied experiences of individual families. Parental choices about children's educations were certainly influenced by gender but they shared common responsibilities and obligations to their distant children once they had decided which path to put them on.

### **Parental responsibilities and advice**

In the Puritan advice tract, *The Office of Christian parents* (1616) its author wrote that, 'In this childhood between seven and fourteen, children growe to have great witte and perceiverance, so as if their parents bee not wise toward them, they will [...] run round about them.'<sup>38</sup> Patriarchalism was a key concept in political thought

---

<sup>34</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, pp. 130 – 31 (22 October 1607).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 138 – 39 (3 October 1608).

<sup>36</sup> Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, pp. 151 – 54 (21 Feb 1597).

<sup>37</sup> Mary Anne Everett Wood (ed.), *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain, from the commencement of the twelfth century to the close of the reign of Queen Mary*, vol. 2 (London, 1846), p. 213 –4; HMC Middleton pp. 547 – 48.

<sup>38</sup> *Office of Christian Parents* (1616) p. 8 – 9; The author is anonymous but it was printed by publisher Cantrell Legge and Cambridge University press who also published conduct

by the seventeenth century and had roots in the sixteenth century as writers increasingly drew parallels between the filial obedience children owed their fathers, to the obedience subjects owed to their kings.<sup>39</sup> That children needed to remain obedient to their parents was universally understood. The emergence of patriarchalism in literature has partly been ascribed to the elevation of the father in the household after the Reformation as absolute ruler within his family.<sup>40</sup> This section shows that fathers indeed took it upon themselves to guide and offer advice to their children, usually sons, during adolescence but argues that even in the seventeenth century, this was not a role they inhabited unaided. Fathers' advice literature was a popular genre in early modern England, but this period also saw the development of mothers' advice literature. This published advice appears strictly gendered with mothers and fathers offering advice based on their areas of knowledge, and giving different advice to boys and girls.<sup>41</sup>

However, manuscript sources show that the lived experience of families was more complex. Children could have several parental figures including their fathers and mothers and their influence was dependent on personality, experience and proximity. This section will consider the types of support parents gave their children in their initial separation during adolescence and compare this with published advice literature. It argues that adolescence was seen as an important stage in life for parents to pass on wisdom to their children but that mothers, tutors, aunts, uncles and family employees could act as parental figures for girls and boys during this important stage in life. The importance of adolescence was not underestimated by parents, or those offering them advice. But, as most upper class parents sent their children to be educated away from home at this crucial life stage, it could be difficult to maintain a level of authority over them, and keep a clear understanding of their responsibilities towards them. Parents continued to care for their children by offering them advice on their learning, healthcare and religious practice, and ensuring they were provided for financially, and with clothing and other items. They did these things by working in partnership not only with their spouse, but other family members, tutors and employees who were also responsible for the education of their children. How

---

literature by Puritan theologian William Perkins; see David McKitterick, 'Cantrell Legge and the University's Common Cause', in *A History of Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 136 – 59.

<sup>39</sup> Schochet, *Patriarchalism in Political Thought*, p. 57.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Jennifer Heller, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 86.

parents managed their responsibilities in this situation was influenced by gender, age, personality and the individual circumstances of families.

Conduct literature stressed that one of the first responsibilities parents had to their children was to find them a suitable tutor. William Kempe, himself a schoolmaster, suggested that one should be found when the child was five years old.<sup>42</sup> He acknowledged that from this point onward the father held authority over the child jointly with this tutor. It was an important position to fill and making the wrong decision could affect the child and family. In the household of Robert and Barbara Sidney a tutor named Mr Bird was appointed for their eldest son William in 1597. Barbara disliked Bird and had problems in asserting authority against him over her son. As Robert was working abroad at this time she had to deal with the situation on her own. Bird criticised Barbara over her attempts to involve herself in William's education, arguing that she was not educated enough herself to do this.<sup>43</sup> Despite this tension, Bird remained in family employment until 1605 when William violently attacked and stabbed him, after which he was sent to London to recuperate.<sup>44</sup> There is no surviving letter between Robert and Barbara about this scandal but it is clear that children's educations and the choices made surrounding them could cause tension between parents, exacerbated by their separation.

Many parents got on well with their children's tutors, possibly because they were so diligent in choosing them and often relied on recommendations from friends or kin.<sup>45</sup> Letters from university tutors to parents could be full of warmth and mutual respect, for example in the correspondence of the Herrick family. William Herrick's son, also William, matriculated at St John's College Oxford in 1613 and he had regular correspondence with William's tutor Christopher Wren, father of the famous architect Christopher Wren. Wren's first letter to Herrick refers to the love and respect he had for them and his care and affection for William.<sup>46</sup> He continued to correspond with both of William's parents, in 1614/15 asking permission from Lady Herrick to take him to Cambridge to see the King.<sup>47</sup> By that point William's younger brother Robert

---

<sup>42</sup> Kempe, *The education of children in learning* (1588); Batt, *The Christian mans closet* (1591) also gives instructions to fathers on how they should choose a suitable tutor.

<sup>43</sup> Michael G. Brennan and Noel J. Kinnamon, *A Sidney Chronology: 1554 – 1654* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 165; Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, pp. 411 – 19 (19 January 1599/1600)

<sup>44</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, pp. 124 – 25; Brennan, Michael G and Noel J Kinnamon, 'Robert Sidney, "Mr Johnson", and the education of William Sidney at Penshurst', *Notes and Queries* (2003), pp. 430 – 37.

<sup>45</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 481, f. 21 (18 April 1613).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. f. 23 (26 April 1613).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. f. 67 (1614/15).

was also in his care so the partnership had clearly been successful. Richard Oxenden also had a positive relationship with his son Henry's tutor, Robert Hegge. Hegge's first letter to Richard is similar in tone to that of Christopher Wren, if even more deferential and certain to praise all of Henry's good and virtuous qualities.<sup>48</sup> He also corresponded with Henry's mother, in a letter of 1625 thanking her profusely for the gift of an embroidered bible.<sup>49</sup> This was a significant gift as it is something Lady Oxenden would have taken considerable time to sew herself and she was likely to have spent time choosing a suitable picture to sew.<sup>50</sup> In this letter he also explained his decision to write mostly to Henry's father, writing, 'My occasions allowing me the time but of writing one letter, I choosed rather to make bold with your husband, and to write it to you; but I need not to excuse it, for you two be one'. In these examples fathers were mostly contacted about their sons' educations and conduct literature certainly portrayed them as being decision-makers in this respect; however, Hegge's comments suggest that this was for reasons of practicality. It was time consuming to write to both separately and if parents lived together, both would see the letter anyway. This view also accorded with the traditional, patriarchal view of the time that wives were legally subsumed under their husband's identity and seen as one. However, the lived experience of parenting from a distance shows that it was not always fathers who were contacted. Evidence suggests that it was the parent who took most active interest and time in corresponding with the tutor and their child who received correspondence in return. For the Oxenden and Herrick families this was usually the father, although Lady Herrick seems to have been the sole correspondent with her daughter's tutor William Cranthorp.<sup>51</sup> However, it was not as simple as fathers corresponding with son's tutors and mothers with daughters. Katherine Paston corresponded with her son's tutors at Corpus Christi, Cambridge. In his first letter to her in January 1624, tutor Samuel Walsall offered Katherine the chance to adjust her son's timetable, stating that he, 'ever shall humbly submit to be moderated, or altered at your good pleasure', so despite the expertise of his male tutors, she, as his mother, had the authority to alter his curriculum.<sup>52</sup>

Even once their children were away at university, or in service, parents still advised them over their learning. Katherine Paston was provided with her son's schedule so that she was fully aware of his curriculum. She continued to reference it in her letters

---

<sup>48</sup> BL Add. MS 27999 f. 24 (5 Sept 1624).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. f. 34 (5 Nov 1625).

<sup>50</sup> Frye, *Pens and Needles*, pp. 136 – 37.

<sup>51</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 476, f. 1, 2 (no date).

<sup>52</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 67 (23 February 1624).

and almost always referred to his religious devotion.<sup>53</sup> Mothers commonly took responsibility for moral education and religious instruction, so she was continuing the authority she had exercised since William's childhood.<sup>54</sup> Even when she was no longer in control of his moral education, she continued to exert some authority over it. Her concern about this can be seen from an early letter to William in 1625, 'I hope thow dost ruminat over all thy Psalms and Chapters and textes of scripture, which longe sinc thou didst learne by harte. I wold be sory thow sholdest forget thy Conduit of Comfort.'<sup>55</sup> However, the use of the word 'hope' here suggests an acknowledgment that she could no longer make William recite the prayers he had known as a child as his education was no longer solely in her control. But she continued to contact his tutors regularly often mentioning this directly to William, for example writing that she hoped to get a good report about him.<sup>56</sup> Children also wrote about their learning in letters to their parents. Letter-writing was an important part of a child's education and became an important medium for continuing their relationship with their parents as they entered adolescence and were often sent away from the family home, to university or into service. Children sent frequent letters home, sometimes separate ones to each parent about their progress and health. How brief or detailed letters were depended on the individual child.<sup>57</sup> A letter from Framlingham Gawdy to his father from university reads, in its entirety: 'Dear father I thought good in these few words to remember my duty. When I am a better scholar you shall have a better letter. Your loving son framlingham gawdy', serving the sole function of fulfilling his obligation to write and inform that he was well.<sup>58</sup> This letter does not have a full address stating only 'to my good father' indicating that it may have been sent along with a more detailed letter from Framlingham's tutor.

However, some children enjoyed their correspondence with their parents and saw it as a link with home. Although only two of William Paston's letters to his mother survive, his enjoyment of correspondence to her is evident from her replies. Her letters often stated that she was happy to hear from him. One in particular declares:

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 71 (11 June 1624), 90 (March 1626?).

<sup>54</sup> This was particularly true after the Reformation, as discussed in Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion*; Silvia Evangelisti, 'Faith and Religion', in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family*, vol. 3 *The Early Modern Age*, eds. Cavallo and Evangelisti, pp. 153 – 70; and Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580 – 1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 83 (6 May 1625).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 71 (11 June 1624).

<sup>57</sup> BL Add. MS 36989 and 27395; HMC Rutland p. 239 (January 1587/8); Long. TH/VOL VIII f. 43 (1628).

<sup>58</sup> BL Add. MS 27395, f. 50 (no date but likely to have been c.1600).

'Truly ther is nothings in this liffe, which dothe afforde vnto me that Comforte and Content, as to heer of thy good and welfare every way.'<sup>59</sup> There is also the implication that he wanted to hear from her just as often, 'I see that thow hast a desire to heer often frome me, and thy often wrightinge to me makes me see, that thow hast a good minde to speake often withe me.'<sup>60</sup> Of the two letters from William that survive we can identify similar material aspects, for example William sealed his letter in three places, on the main fold but also both corners, a method of sealing also evident on his mother's letters.<sup>61</sup> The main difference in their letters is that William's are more formally laid out with spaces for margins and before the signature, in the appropriate style for any letter to a social superior. Katherine's letters to him display greater informality and she filled the page, often writing in the margins, highlighting her close relationship with her son, but also an informality that was appropriate in her role as mother. Daybell argues that late medieval letters between husbands and wives show men to be less restrained by the social codes that their wives continued to adhere to.<sup>62</sup> Adherence to conventions may have been influenced by gender but altered depending on social status and formal relationships. Even in a close and affectionate parent-child correspondence, children were still expected to retain a level of formality to show respect in their writing to their mother or father, where parents could be more informal if they chose.<sup>63</sup> Katherine often referred to separate letters sent to William by his younger brother suggesting a close relationship between the siblings as well. Letters to his father are rarely mentioned adding to the evidence for Katherine as the dominant parent. William's father Edmund was described as 'exceedinge sick' from 1618 and all family business was done by Katherine.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps Edmund's illness made him unable to write to his son, or their relationship had suffered because of his ill health. Regardless, Katherine was certainly the parent with whom William enjoyed the warmest relationship and relied on for support and advice on all matters.

---

<sup>59</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 82 (18 April 1625).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72 (25 June 1624).

<sup>61</sup> BL Add. MS 36989 f. 32 (26 January 1624).

<sup>62</sup> James Daybell, 'Medieval Women's Letters, 1350-1500', p. 182.

<sup>63</sup> Alison Truelove, 'Commanding Communications: The Fifteenth-Century Letters of the Stonor Women', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. James Daybell, p. 50.

<sup>64</sup> A large part of Katherine's correspondence deals with family business matters. There was a dispute after the death of Edmund's grandfather, William Paston, around maintenance payments and property to his heirs. William's eldest son, Edmund's father Christopher, was mentally ill and so William had put much of his money into a trust for his grandson, Edmund. This led to legal disputes between William's descendants which Katherine was a crucial part of as she fought to keep the financial provisions intact for her children. (Detailed in Hughey, 'Introduction', pp. 1 – 27).

One of the main responsibilities parents had for their children when away at university or in service was to keep them supplied with money and clothing. Which parent took on this responsibility varied between families. In the Lisle correspondence, it is clear that Honor was in charge of the day-to-day decision making about the children. Her husband Arthur was usually consulted about the most important decisions, for example which school Honor's sons should be sent to, and it was usually the sons' lives over which he had an input. Alison Wall asserts that even over these decisions, correspondents usually wrote to Honor as well to ask her to persuade her husband.<sup>65</sup> There is little evidence that he was directly consulted about his daughters' or stepdaughters' daily lives or educations, although it seems safe to assume that Honor would have discussed issues with him based on the evidence of joint letters written to the couple or partner letters which contained similar issues. As shown above, in the Herrick family in the early seventeenth century, both parents corresponded with their sons' tutors, including over their expenses and requirements showing continuity in parental obligations for their child's education. In 1614/5 Wren included William and Robert's expenses bills in a letter to their mother but in 1616 wrote to their father to explain why William's last expenses bill had been higher than expected.<sup>66</sup> William Gawdy wrote to his mother thanking her for sending some stockings but asking for another pair because they were too big.<sup>67</sup> However, his tutor Edmund Eade directed a request for bedding and expenses bills to William's father Framlingham.<sup>68</sup>

Another role often ascribed to mothers was responsibility for healthcare in the family. Although mothers and fathers were both concerned when their children were suffering from an illness, mothers do appear to have been more proactive in offering advice about how to prevent it.<sup>69</sup> In the letter mentioned above concerning William Gawdy, the tutor had responded to a query from William's father about the damp in his chamber, but on the whole, this aspect of a child's wellbeing was often a primary concern of their mothers.<sup>70</sup> Katherine Paston's many letters to her son also provide an extensive example of this kind of advice. One of her earliest concerns was that her son William should beware of exercising too much, and she frequently praised

---

<sup>65</sup> Wall, *Power and Protest*, pp. 88 – 89.

<sup>66</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c.481 f. 67 (1614 – 1615), 71 (21 Oct 1616).

<sup>67</sup> BL Add. MS 36989, f. 38 (5 Nov 1629).

<sup>68</sup> HMC Gawdy p. 132 (15 April 1629, 14 July 1629); William Gawdy's grandfather Bassingbourne passed his expenses for a new chamber onto his father when studying at Clifford's Inn in the late 1570s.

<sup>69</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 215 (19 May 1597); Oxenden 27999 f. 53 (7 July 1627); Thynne vol. III f. 217 (3 June 1569); Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England*.

<sup>70</sup> HMC Gawdy p. 132 (15 April 1629, 14 July 1629).



moderation in both exercise and diet.<sup>71</sup> Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey's work on health in Renaissance Italy shows that there was a discourse on the benefits and dangers of exercise in the sixteenth century, something English writers had also begun to discuss.<sup>72</sup> It had always been seen as important by authorities recognised by medieval universities, like Galen and Avicenna, who advocated health preservation by monitoring the six 'non-naturals' of air, food and drink, sleep and waking, movement and rest, retention and evacuation, and the passions of the soul or emotions. However, a group of writers also began to consider its dangers, acknowledging that different age groups should exercise appropriately. Doctors feared that the adolescent body might be damaged by too much vigorous exertion.<sup>73</sup> There was a lively culture of health preservation in place within this prominent healthcare system which included exercise and diet; moderation in both was believed to prevent illness.<sup>74</sup> These dominant ideas about health were influential in early modern England and Katherine's advice about her son's leisure activities and diet show her engagement with these debates.<sup>75</sup> Moderation was also a laudable Christian habit, so these teachings also came under Katherine's role to provide moral and religious instruction for her son. But even while Katherine advised William to eat moderately, she also sent him large food packages.<sup>76</sup> In one 1625 letter she advised him to be, 'every way moderate in thy recreations and carfull and temperate in thy diet' but sent him, 'a Cake and Cheese a few pudinges and linkes: a turkey pie pasty: a pot of Quinces and some marmelate.'<sup>77</sup> This could be seen purely as motherly indulgence but perhaps served a comforting purpose by sending him home-made foods.

There was an active dialogue between social practice and medical advice about healthy living, and it could be inferred that in her letters to William, Katherine was participating in this discourse. Any discussions about healthcare and specific items of food or drink were passed on to her son. She advised William to 'be moderat in

---

<sup>71</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 67 (23 February 1624 - in this letter William's tutor responded to her concern about exercise), pp.78 – 79 (March 1625?).

<sup>72</sup> Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>75</sup> Jennifer Evans, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell press, 2014), pp. 34 – 40 shows that men and women engaged with medical treatises and were part of a tradition of comparing works and compiling their own recipes and medical ideas in texts such as commonplace books.

<sup>76</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, pp. 71 – 72 (11 June 1624), 78 – 79 (March 1625?).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 78 – 9 (March 1625?).

atinge peie crust,' which was in line with current medical discussion about the increase of pastry-covered foods in everyday diet.<sup>78</sup> Katherine endorsed liquorice which she believed: 'will stay the ruhum. when tobaca will not', although added the veiled warning, 'I hop to heer you still hate the very smell of tobaca.'<sup>79</sup> Other foods she advised William to stay away from included wine and, Katherine wrote:

I hope thow dost not eate of those possetty curdy drinkes which howsoever pleasinge to the pallet it maybe for a time, yett I am parswaded are most vnhollosom and very Clogginge to the stomake [...] but if need be to haue such thinges, you know how clear thay wear made at hom for the and so lett them be still.<sup>80</sup>

This also implies her concern that, away from home, she could not influence his health by controlling his diet. Katherine was keen to show she was still in a unique position of knowledge of her son, despite his departure from home, and possibly trying to reassert some control through this familiarity.

Parents also gave their children more general advice, to be taken as a guide on how to behave and live their lives, and increasingly recorded this for posterity. Advice letters from fathers to sons were a popular print genre from the late sixteenth century. Conventions of this genre were that fathers offered advice to their eldest son, usually about financial matters, their public conduct, and their future family relationships.<sup>81</sup> The tradition of 'Mirrors of Princes' which offered advice to future sovereigns is a long one dating back to the Classical World, which included several popular Renaissance publications for example, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince*.<sup>82</sup> So the genre of advice literature was already established, but the sixteenth century saw it widen to incorporate publications aimed at the gentry and aristocracy. Felicity Heal categorises advice literature as a 'gift' of words and advice from parents and argues that the extension of preaching under Protestant influence was crucial in providing this new focus for father's advice in the

---

<sup>78</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 89 (March 1626?); James Hart, *Klinike or the Diet of the Diseased* (London: 1633); Joan Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), p. 108. Northampton doctor James Hart wrote about similar concerns in his 1633 treatise, namely that food smothered in pastry was unhealthy, a concern probably raised due to the increasing prevalence of ovens in ordinary homes.

<sup>79</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 71 (11 June 1624).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 78 – 9 (March 1625?).

<sup>81</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 84; Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 10 – 11.

<sup>82</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (1532); Desiderius Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516).

late sixteenth century.<sup>83</sup> The patriarchal emphasis on the importance of the father in the household certainly influenced the growth of these publications, however, as will be shown, direct advice about religious instruction was a convention of mothers' advice literature. These newer fathers' advice publications were written by learned aristocratic men who were preparing their sons for a career in politics and statecraft. Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland wrote a treatise in two parts of advice for his son before he had even been conceived.<sup>84</sup> The first part of the work was written in 1595, seven years before his son Algernon was born. Henry was married in 1594 so perhaps he and his wife were expecting their first child around the time of writing. The work mainly focuses on advice about education, listing subjects he thought it useful for his son to study, including Latin, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Politics and Economics, among others, and a long passage detailing different combinations of studying manners, exercises and academic subjects, acknowledging that individual children might learn better in different ways.<sup>85</sup> He stressed the importance of a good education and placed responsibility on the parent to be 'skilful, judicial, and vigilant' in choosing a tutor.<sup>86</sup> His advice in this first part is very much aimed at an adolescent child, describing the life stage as one of 'a mighty change from hope or a fortune uncertain to time limited from obeying to be obeyed'. He also acknowledged the difference in temperament and possible tensions that might arise between father and son:

Imperfections of age in fathers grow tedious to a forward youth, neither do vanities of young men ever best suit with old conditions, for rare it is to find a father that will tolerate the courses of green years out of the depth of consideration, and a son that can admit age's errors with patience out of the strength of their own knowledge. If this judgement correspond not reciprocally on both sides, discontentments either in secret or public must needs be wedded to their hearts.<sup>87</sup>

As Henry did not have any children at the stage of writing, it can be inferred that he had had similar experiences in his own adolescence and wanted to pass on his wisdom to his future son. Although it is possible that his wife was pregnant at the time of the composition, this also points towards the artificiality that could affect this genre. This text, in many ways more a literary work, was certainly not aimed

---

<sup>83</sup> Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> G. B. Harrison (ed.), *Advice to His Son by Henry Percy Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1609)* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

personally at a well-beloved son, but for a wider audience interested in the opinions of important statesmen. The second part of Henry's treatise was written around 1609 when he was separated from his family due to imprisonment.<sup>88</sup> This second section is more autobiographical, describing his relations with his parents and issues over his inheritance. He then moves on to pass on advice about adult life and estate management to his son, particularly emphasising the importance of choosing a wife, but not to let her have any input into financial or business matters. One reason given for this was the difference in education of men and women. He allowed that girls should be taught to read and write, but only to keep them from idleness, and stated that girls do not make any progress in learning after their adolescence and that their bringing up 'can promise no deep insight into matters of knowledge'.<sup>89</sup> Although aimed at his son, Henry was passing down advice about how to view women and treat future generations of Percy wives and daughters.

The seventeenth century also saw a growth in printed women's advice writing.<sup>90</sup> The first publications in the genre appear to have been initiated by men. Philip Stubbes reported his wife's advice to their son on her deathbed in a 1591 publication *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women* which was aimed at a broad audience and became one of the most reprinted publications of the seventeenth century.<sup>91</sup> In 1602 Nicholas Breton published a fictional poem entitled *The Mother's Blessing*.<sup>92</sup> Although light hearted in tone, Breton presented advice from a mother to son including areas to study, how to avoid vice, and the importance of choosing the correct wife. Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mother's Legacie* was addressed to her unborn child, in the event of her death in childbirth, a premonition which turned out to be accurate. The book was published after her death in 1624, edited by publisher

---

<sup>88</sup> Henry was suspected of having links with Gunpowder Plotter, Thomas Percy who was a distant cousin and employee. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London from 1605 – 22; Walter Raleigh's advice book to his son was also written when he was imprisoned in the Tower; Walter Raleigh, Walter, *Sir Walter Raleighs instructions to his sonne and to posterity* (London: 1632).

<sup>89</sup> Harrison (ed.), *Advice to His Son...*, p. 91.

<sup>90</sup> Betty Travitsky (ed.), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series 1, Printed Writings 1500 – 1640: Part 2, Vol. 8, Mother's Advice Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), and 'The New Mother of the English Renaissance: Her Writings on Motherhood', in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*, eds. Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1980).

<sup>91</sup> Marcy L. North, 'Women, the material book and early printing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 68 – 82.

<sup>92</sup> Philip Stubbes, *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women, Containing a Most Excellent Discourse of the Godly Life and Christian Death of Mistress Katherine Stubbes* (London: 1591); Nicholas Breton, *The Mother's Blessing* (London: 1602).

Thomas Goad.<sup>93</sup> It follows the conventions of earlier literature in advising against vice and in praise of piety but follows specific conventions of the mothers' advice genre where legacy writing was common.<sup>94</sup> She also, in the same vein as Henry Percy, set out her wishes for her child's education dependent on their gender, although stressing that she only made suggestions for her daughter's education and the final decision would rest with her husband. However, some publications in this genre were written by women, such as Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscellanea. Prayers. Meditations. Memoratives* published in 1604.<sup>95</sup> Grymeston was from a Catholic family and addressed the book, mainly religious in nature, to her son. As well as religious instruction, other advice in the work is similar in content to Protestant writers, namely how to choose a suitable wife and how to conduct oneself in marriage. These sentiments were echoed by other writers of the time including Dorothy Leigh whose work, also titled *The Mother's Blessing*, added to the body of mothers' advice literature in 1616 and was reprinted around twenty times.<sup>96</sup> Leigh addressed both parents and children in her work and spent a large section advising how her children should bring up their own children, showing a concern for future generations and providing an insight into the values of bringing up her own children. She also focused on religious instruction and advised that the education of children should instil the values of 'gentleness and patience'. In contrast to other works, she did not instruct her sons how to choose a wife, advising them to let God direct them in this matter, however she did stress the importance of constancy in love and marriage.<sup>97</sup> Where fathers advised sons primarily on how to be successful gentlemen and courtiers, mothers usually concentrated on religious instruction and marriage-making. Although, as this chapter shows, mothers and fathers could support their children in varied ways, not necessarily tied to gendered expectations, in conduct literature, a gender divide is evident.

Publications in the mothers' advice genre, marketed as personal advice from a mother to her children, were actually aimed at a wider audience. They often sought to influence mothers in their parenting conduct as well as using the medium to demonstrate their own ideas and writing skills.<sup>98</sup> Raymond Anselment looks at the

---

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie* (1624).

<sup>94</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy* p. 159 – 91.

<sup>95</sup> Travitsky, *The Early Modern Englishwoman*.

<sup>96</sup> Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing* (1616); Marcy L. North, 'Women, the material book and early printing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Lunger, p. 68 – 82.

<sup>97</sup> Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing*, (1616), p. 46 – 49.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

letters of Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley to their sons, in the context of the mothers' advice genre.<sup>99</sup> Although this comparison is an interesting one, the letters are a different medium and warrant consideration in their own right, separate from published literature. Katherine was not presenting a persona to anyone outside her personal correspondents or looking to influence any other women. Letters in this period were not always assumed to be completely private between the sender and addressee, but it is unlikely that many outside of Katherine and William's immediate circle of servants, friends or tutors would have seen the correspondence. In short, the motives for writing were completely different. Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen describes Katherine as using letters as 'an epistolary space within which she could "talk" with her son' adding that letter writing manuals of the time emphasised that letter writers should aim at a style reminiscent of face-to-face conversation.<sup>100</sup> As she appears to have had a close bond with her eldest son, it seems likely that she would have aimed to write to him in a conversational style, emphasising their familiarity. All her letters to William are autograph. It is less unusual for a woman in the early seventeenth century to have a level of literacy capable of writing long letters than for the Paston women of the fifteenth century who relied on scribes, but it still showed care and attention from Katherine to her son that she did write personally. It is unlikely that the letters were written with a wider audience in mind, so using these sources provides more genuine evidence of how relationships were sustained and negotiated in spite of distance and offer a different perspective on the more descriptive conduct literature of Puritan writers at this time.<sup>101</sup>

These more informal letters of advice can be traced at least as far back as the fifteenth century, and were written by mothers and fathers.<sup>102</sup> Caroline Bowden's work on mothers' advice literature shows that publications emerge from a tradition of manuscript advice, and this is also the case for fathers' advice.<sup>103</sup> Letters from fathers to sons are the most common in the genre and it does seem that usually, fathers would take it upon themselves to pass on wisdom to their eldest son at the appropriate age. This mirrors the patrilineal inheritance system of England where

---

<sup>99</sup> Raymond A. Anselment, 'Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley: Maternal Letters and the Genre of Mother's Advice', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 101 (2004), pp. 431 – 53.

<sup>100</sup> Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, 'Intertextual networks in the correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston', in *Letter Writing*, eds. Terttu Nevalainen and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), p. 85.

<sup>101</sup> Davies, 'Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage', pp. 76 – 77.

<sup>102</sup> R. C. Richardson, 'The Generation Gap: Parental Advice in Early Modern England', *Clio*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2002), pp. 6 – 7; p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries...' p. 129.

fathers also transmitted skills to their eldest sons.<sup>104</sup> Henry Sidney wrote a private letter to his son Philip in 1566 which much more personal and loving in tone reflecting the fact that it was intended for Philip to read, and not a much wider audience.<sup>105</sup> George Manners wrote to his father in reply to a letter of advice that 'being but now newly entered into the world to execute and put in practise [...] those precepts which being so perfect I have received from you' acknowledging how seriously this custom was taken by children during this rite of passage.<sup>106</sup> The advice Henry Sidney gave to his son after he had moved away to attend university is very similar to that found in the letters of Katherine Paston around fifty years later. He wrote that his 'natural care' of his son prompted him to write the words of advice, focusing on the importance of devotion to God, diligence in reading and learning, obedience to his tutor, moderation in diet and exercise, and the virtues of modesty, truthfulness but also merriness.<sup>107</sup>

Perhaps the fact that in the 1560s a father was offering this advice to his son, where in the 1620s Katherine Paston was providing it as a mother suggests a shift in parenting roles where mothers became more likely to give advice. Michelle Dowd argues that the Reformation had increased the status of mothers but did not precisely define the new authority they were expected to exert in the household.<sup>108</sup> Jennifer Heller also argues that faith was 'the common denominator' in this genre as women exercised their new role in instructing their children in religious education.<sup>109</sup> However, the Paston women in the fifteenth century also gave advice to their sons, particularly after their fathers had died.<sup>110</sup> Although published literature upheld a gendered divide in the appropriate areas for mothers and father to give advice, unpublished letters show that in reality, this divide was not as clear-cut. There was a shared understanding of the areas in which children needed to be instructed and advised and in reality it was the dominant parent who had the closest relationship with the child who was more likely to pass on their wisdom.<sup>111</sup> While this gendering appears straightforward when looking at published advice literature, the lived

---

<sup>104</sup> Michelle Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 135; Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 85.

<sup>105</sup> W. Baptiste Scoones (ed.), *Four Centuries of English letters: Selections from the Correspondence of one hundred and fifty writers from the period of the Paston letters to the present day* (London: 1893), p. 23 – 24 (1566).

<sup>106</sup> HMC Rutland, pp. 195 – 96 (18 June 1586).

<sup>107</sup> Baptiste Scoones (ed.), *Four Centuries of English Letters*, pp. 23 – 4 (1566).

<sup>108</sup> Dowd, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, p. 137 – 39.

<sup>109</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 6.

<sup>110</sup> Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, p. 27 – 28 (4 February 1445).

<sup>111</sup> Heller, *The Mother's Legacy*, p. 86.

experience of parenting was more complex and dependent on individual families. Other family members could also take on this role as advice-giver. In the Sidney family, Henry Sidney often referred to his eldest son Philip in letters to his younger son, Robert. He advised Robert to listen to guidance from, 'your most loving brother, who in loving you is comparable with me, or excedyth me.'<sup>112</sup> Letters from Philip to his younger brother while he was studying at Oxford contain similar advice and mirror the language of Katherine Paston's letters to William. Philip advised Robert, 'Looke to your diet', and 'lett no daye passe without an hower or two such exercise; the rest studie, or confer diligentlie, and so shall yow come home to my comfort and credit,' while suggesting suitable books and areas of study for Robert's curriculum.<sup>113</sup> This further supports the idea that parental advice was not only not gendered, but also not necessarily specific to a parent. Family members deemed to have the most knowledge of a child's development and the closest relationship with them were accepted as mentors and advice-givers.

The reality of parenting an adolescent child in the aristocratic and gentry classes was that parents were required to work in partnership with other adults who often came to act as surrogate parents as children were separated from their natural parents. Bartholomew Batt went as far as to say that: 'All are vnderstoode by the name of Parents, vnder whose gouernment wée liue, such are chiefly our naturall parents, then our Magistrates, Pastors, Teachers, Tutors, Maisters and Mistresses, and such like.'<sup>114</sup> However, the adjective 'natural' is used frequently in this period to describe the care or love parents felt towards their children. As this usually referred to parents who separated themselves from their children, it was important to differentiate and emphasise the 'natural' love of a biological parent compared to the many other parental figures a child would be brought up by in their youth. But this is not to say the responsibilities shared with these other figures were not significant.

Tutors have already been considered as a crucial part of the upbringing of aristocratic children with several detailed examples from the early seventeenth century. For boys at university from the Middle Ages onwards, the College Master's legal status was explicitly 'in loco parentis' as matriculation involved students accepting their authority. They were given a large amount of responsibility, even

---

<sup>112</sup> Arthur Collins (ed.), *Letters and memorials of state: in the reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, part of the reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver's usurpation* (London: Printed for T. Osborne, 1746), p. 246 – 47 (March 1578).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 283 – 85 (18 October 1580).

<sup>114</sup> Batt, *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 62.



over matters of life and death. Richard Oxenden, when hearing that his son was seriously ill did not go to him in Cambridge but wrote:

Sonne I woold with all my hart have come unto you if I did thinke I could have donne you any good but I am well assured that youre tutor will doe as much for you as I could if I weare with you.<sup>115</sup>

Tutors were also responsible for making the decision when to move their students away from the city and out of the danger of plague.<sup>116</sup> Men and women who took children into service had a similar type and level of responsibility as tutors. Bess of Hardwick supervised the education of girls in her service, on one occasion passing on to her charge Bessie Knollis and daughter Frances to 'saye yf they pley ther uergenalles that the are good gerles', encouraging them to practise their musical skills, one area of study for young noblewoman.<sup>117</sup> Girls could form a strong emotional attachment with the women they served, as the Lisle girls Mary and Anne Basset did. However, this relationship could also be problematic and make the role of parent and surrogate parent complicated. In the 1580s, Elizabeth Manners, countess of Rutland, sent her daughter into service with her step-grandmother, the Countess of Bedford. She wrote in a letter to family servant Thomas Screven about two problems that occurred, firstly: 'I should have thought a lady so honourably minded as my Lady Bedford would have afforded my daughter furniture for her chamber in her house.'<sup>118</sup> Usually parents would have been expected to pay for the costs of their children away from home, so it is unclear why Elizabeth was offended by the Countess of Bedford's refusal to do this. It is possible that furniture was usually out of the scope of the parent's expenses, although Elizabeth did agree to send the furniture, so perhaps, as a family member, she might have expected more financial costs to be incurred by the Countess of Bedford. Her second issue concerned the future direction of her daughter's socialisation, in a letter referencing news passed on by an employee: 'Boston wrote that Lady Bedford told him that she meant to put my daughter presently to the Queen. I hope this will not as yet fall so, for Bridget has no acquaintance in that place and is therefore most unfit for it.'<sup>119</sup> This issue is a clearer case of confusion in authority and the parental roles inhabited by the two women. The Countess of Bedford obviously felt that Bridget's career

---

<sup>115</sup> BL Add. MS 27999, f. 53 (7 July 1627).

<sup>116</sup> Long. TH/VOL/III f. 217 (3 June 1569); Bodl. MS Eng hist c.481 f. 27 (26 April 1613).

<sup>117</sup> ID 101, Bess of Hardwick to Francis Whitfield, 20 October [c. 1560], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=101>

<sup>118</sup> HMC Rutland p. 266 (26 Nov 1588).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

would be advanced by a placement at court and confidently began to make arrangements without informing her mother, who did not feel that Bridget was ready. It is possible that the women came to some compromise but Lady Bedford's opinion seems to have won out as Bridget was serving at court less than a year later. This case shows us how far women were willing to exert authority over children who were not their own, and how biological parents sometimes struggled to maintain their authority over their child's education. Although the aim of placing Bridget with her high-status kin was surely to improve her prospects, Elizabeth still had her opinions over the best way to do this and tried to regain control of her daughter from afar.

*The Office of Christian parents* stated that the office of parent could belong to other family members, and they did often take on important roles in the education of the children in the family, depending on their status and circumstance.<sup>120</sup> This aspect of wider kinship obligations was a feature of family life throughout the late medieval and early modern period. Raumolin-Brunberg and Navalainen's analysis of the late fifteenth-century Cely correspondence suggests that Richard Cely the younger was sent away from home to be educated, possibly in York where his maternal uncle lived, as his spellings (and so pronunciation) of words appear to be from a northern dialect.<sup>121</sup> It was common for a relative to take some role in the care of a child if they were geographically close to them. William Paston II reported news of his nephews to their mother when they were all in Cambridge in the 1450s, reporting that they were both learning well and that he would ensure the gowns she requested for them were made.<sup>122</sup> When their descendent in the seventeenth century, William Paston, temporarily left Cambridge because of plague, he continued his education at his uncle's house which was located closer to the city than his parents' house.<sup>123</sup> William Herrick's transition to university in this period was made easier by his uncle Thomas who worked to ensure both that he settled in, and that his parents were clear about their responsibilities. Thomas wrote to his sister, William's mother, to advise her as to William's expenses and initially, what sort of tutor to look for.<sup>124</sup> So it seems from these examples that families in the seventeenth century continued to foster ties in their horizontal kin networks. Both paternal and maternal uncles were a trusted choice of parental figure for an adolescent child away from their parents' home.

---

<sup>120</sup> *The Office of Christian parents* (1616), p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Helena Raumolin-Brunberg and Terttu Navalainen, 'Like father (un)like son: a sociolinguistic approach to the language of the Cely family', in *Studies in Middle English Linguistics*, ed. Jacek Fisiak (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 489 – 511.

<sup>122</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, p. 156 – 57 (10 August prob. 1458)

<sup>123</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 127.

<sup>124</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 481 f. 21 (18 April 1613).

Aunts could also take this role, for example in the case of Anne Clifford who we have seen went into service with her Aunt, the countess of Warwick, who successfully introduced her into court circles.<sup>125</sup> Grandparents could also be crucial sources of support for their grandchildren and act in a parental role. This will be discussed in chapter two which considers how the parent-child relationship changed as parents reached old age.

The final category of person who could act in a parental role was the family employee. Often when parents were separated from their children, they appointed an employee to care for them in their absence. Both Arthur and Honor Lisle in the 1530s, and Robert Sidney in the 1580s and 90s were separated from some or all of their children by sea as they worked abroad, and both had trusted servants who cared for them and reported on their news from England. The Lisles had several employees who remained based in England after their move. The most important of these was John Husee and some of the greatest detail we have about the lives of the Lisle children come from his illuminating letters to Honor. Honor's eldest son, John, heir to the Basset lands of her deceased first husband, remained in England after his mother and stepfather moved to Calais and was under the care of Husee almost straightaway. He moved to London to study at Lincoln's Inn in 1535. Husee certainly arranged his admittance and move there, on the orders of Arthur and Honor, and John largely remained his responsibility for his entire time there. There are very few letters from John to his mother which suggests that he relied on Husee to communicate news back about him, which Husee did with frequency. One of Husee's initial responsibilities when John moved to London was to ensure he was appropriately attired. In January 1535 he sent a long letter detailing exactly the clothes John required, ending the list with the comment, 'And less than here written he cannot have, to be anything likely apparelled as appertaineth to his birth.'<sup>126</sup> In this letter he was quite forceful about stating exactly what John needed and it did not seem as if Honor had much choice but to agree and pay for the items. Presumably the Lisles were happy to have someone looking after their children who took such an interest in them and appears to have been competent in ensuring their wellbeing.

Husee acted in a similar capacity when Honor's daughters, Katherine and Anne, were sent over to England with the aim of placing them in service to the Queen to

---

<sup>125</sup> Clifford (ed.), *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*.

<sup>126</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 4, pp. 16 – 18.

begin careers at court. He also reassured her that the girls were well advised by family friend the Countess of Sussex:

And as touching any exhortations or good counsel to be given unto your daughters, your ladyship shall not need fear as long as my Lady Sussex is here: and besides that, the gentlewomen are of a good judgement and hath fine wits, so that I trust there shall be no fault found in them.<sup>127</sup>

So she did not need to worry about them, because others, acting as surrogate parental figures, were more than competent in ensuring their wellbeing. Rowland Whyte served in a similar capacity for Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester. The editors of Rowland Whyte's letters remark that Robert and Rowland's personal relationship was 'an unusually close one' as they had known each other since their own adolescence, but his role in the Sidney family's life is comparable to that of John Husee.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Robert thought Whyte's letters so important that he kept most of them, unlike his letters from his wife, which he did not.<sup>129</sup> Whyte reported news of all the children's health and developments in learning and appeared to develop close bonds with them, which included by the year 1600 being unable to leave the household because it was Robert's eldest daughter Mary's birthday.<sup>130</sup> Parents relied heavily on other adults to ensure the success of their plans to educate and socialise their children, although this could sometimes lead to disagreements if ideas about the best course for the children were not agreed, but largely seems to have been a mutually beneficial arrangement. It also benefitted the children themselves and served as an introduction to networking and dealing with the different, sometimes conflicting views of their friends and mentors.

### **Changes in authority**

This focus on the obligations of parents to their children reveals the lived experience of parenting, and what aims for education tell us about a social group and the importance they placed on different values. However, this is often a one-sided view of the experience. This chapter will now discuss how far we can see the agency of children emerging during their adolescence. Houlbrooke notes that it is not surprising that we have more sources on adolescent children than young children

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 163 – 65.

<sup>128</sup> Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, p. 5.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, p. 44 – 46 (25 September 1595) he gave an individual update on each child and their educational progress; p. 547 – 48 (18 October 1600).

as their separation from parents could cause anxiety and was the first stage of life where individuals began to live an autonomous life.<sup>131</sup> Letters between parents and children often show the maturation of adolescents and their early attempts to assert adult authority and renegotiate their relationships with their parents. Children demonstrated views of their own about their learning and lifestyles, and sometimes this caused conflict with their parents.

Despite common advice that parents should choose suitable tutors for their children, on some occasions it can be seen that children expressed an opinion on who they should stay with and where they should be educated. Lord Darcy passed on a message from his niece to Elizabeth Manners, countess of Rutland that she 'is very desirous to enter your service', and it seems likely that parents would have taken their children's wishes into account.<sup>132</sup> As much as conduct literature promoted obedience of children to parents, it also criticised tyrannical parents who forced decisions onto their offspring. We certainly hear from girls who were unhappy in their placements. The large surviving letter collections of the fifteenth century all contain examples of this as Elizabeth Paston, Jane Stonor and Dorothy Plumpton all wrote to their parents in this manner.<sup>133</sup> Elizabeth and Jane wrote to their mothers but Dorothy wrote to her father, indicating that both parents had equal influence and interest over where their daughters were placed. Although the reported accusation towards Dorothy's father was 'ye have litle favor vnto me', she did not believe this was the case and asked him to 'quench' the error. The idea that fathers might have had little interest in their daughters' lives and education is proven incorrect here through Dorothy's own belief in his favour and her choice to write to him. Peter Fleming suggests that we must question the strength of attachment felt by medieval parents to the children they sent away and Diane Bornstein uses the example of the letter concerning Jane Stonor as proof of the lack of attachment of medieval parents, saying that her mother showed 'little concern' for her feelings.<sup>134</sup> However, a closer look at this letter makes clear that this is not the case. Jane's mother replied: 'wher as ye thynk I sshuld be unkynde to yow, verrely pat I am nat, fer and ye be as I left

---

<sup>131</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 178.

<sup>132</sup> HMC Rutland p. 132 (28 Feb 1581/2).

<sup>133</sup> Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 41 – 42 (28 January 1458); Carpenter (ed.), *Stonor Letters and Papers*, p. 210 – 11, (c. 1472); Joan Kirby (ed.), *The Plumpton Letters and Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 294 – 95 (c. 1506).

<sup>134</sup> Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (London: Palgrave, 2001), p. 126; Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), p. 115.

yow, as I trust verrelly pat ye be, I am a wyll be to yow as a moder sshuld be.<sup>135</sup> This not only indicates a degree of care for the welfare of her daughter, but also a sense of duty that she was doing the right thing for her. That parents upheld their decisions and might overrule the feelings of their child does not mean that they did not listen to them at all.

James Basset, the youngest of the Lisle children, appears to have had a talent for getting adults to promote his interests. From a young age he was able to assert himself and his wishes, and use his networks effectively. In 1536, at the age of nine, James was sent to Paris under the care of Guillaume Legras, a merchant and friend of the Lisles. He studied at the Collège de Navarre which was extremely prestigious and the place of education for French royalty and nobility throughout the Middle Ages. Legras arranged his tuition and made sure he was well provided for, but in 1537 James wrote to his mother and stepfather to ask if he could reside in the college. It seems he preferred the idea of living in the college as opposed to in the quiet household of Legras, although he gave reasons of possible networking opportunities. He stated that he was 'vexed' by the decision not to place him at the college where he could have made the acquaintance of, 'Monsieur de Vendome and the sons of Monsieur de Guise and grown into their familiarity, and because the attachments that one forms in youth often endure to old age'.<sup>136</sup> Here he was referring to Charles of Guise, son of the Duke of Guise, later brother-in-law to James V of Scotland and an important French Cardinal, and Charles de Bourbon, also later a cardinal and a claimant to the French throne. That students of the college went on to hold senior religious and political positions in France shows the level of society which James aspired to fraternise with, and he indeed remained a part of influential Catholic circles in England and France until his death shortly after the end of his service as private secretary to Mary I.<sup>137</sup> Presumably this was also his parents' intention in sending him there and must have been a powerful argument in support of his request. He added that his French would improve if he lived in the college although this seems to be merely an extra point to add to his case with the aim of escaping the control of the Legras household. When it seemed that his request to move to the College would not be granted he also wrote to John Bekynsaw, a family friend who also responsible for his welfare in Paris, and to the Bishop of Winchester,

---

<sup>135</sup> Carpenter (ed.), *Stonor Letters and Papers*, p. 120 (c. 1472).

<sup>136</sup> St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 4, p. 479 (September 1537).

<sup>137</sup> Sarah Clayton, 'Bassett, James (c.1526–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70827, accessed 5 June 2015]

Stephen Gardiner, his former guardian in England, to ensure that his request was met.

Although, initially, his parents were opposed to the idea, they changed their minds and James was moved to the college. For a ten-year-old boy, James had a precocious ability to assert authority through his writing skills and networks of influential people. He continued to use this ability within a few months of moving to the college when he wrote to his mother and all those who were responsible for him in Paris to complain of his treatment there. His letters were concerning enough for John Bekynsaw to be sent straight to the College to check on his treatment. Bekynsaw reported back to Honor that:

It may please you to wit that as soon as ever I knew of it, I went incontinently to the Rector of the University, in whose chamber he lieth, and was very round with him. He is a man well-learned, a good man and of a great house, and keepeth his chamber more like a prince than a scholar. He loveth your son, and studieth more to bring him up in cleanliness and good manners pertaining to a gentleman than in learning, although he doth that too very diligently.<sup>138</sup>

It is after this episode that we can see how far James's attempts at asserting his own agency and authority to influence people actually worked. Bekynsaw ended his letter with the advice that: 'Children complaineth otherwhile when a man doth most for their profit. I pray you quiet your mind, and let Guylyam le Gras and me alone for the time your son shall be here.'<sup>139</sup> With Legras adding that, 'Children sometimes make their complaints about trifling things'.<sup>140</sup> These letters from James's guardians show us two important points about parent-child relationships. Firstly, that his mother, Honor, was reliant on the judgement of other adults to ensure the wellbeing of her son and could only assert parental authority by letters and the issuing of orders to them to look into matters and inform her. And secondly, that although a precocious and confident child like James Basset had the ability to make adults drop everything to look into his complaints, he was not fully in charge of the situation. Although Bekynsaw immediately acted on Honor's request to look into James's complaints, on finding that they were somewhat exaggerated he was not hesitant to voice the opinion that children were often not capable of reasonable judgement and should not necessarily be taken at their word.

---

<sup>138</sup> St. Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 4, p. 498 (4 March 1538).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, p. 501 – 02 (17 March 1538).

Other children also voiced their opinions on their curriculum at university, although with differing levels of success to James Basset. Bassingbourne Gawdy had to convince his father that his move to study the law at Clifford's Inn was for the best, against his father's worries about what being in London might do to his son's behaviour.<sup>141</sup> In a letter of 1570, John Thynne wrote to his father from university in Oxford asking him 'to relese me from ye grecke tonge', something he knew his father would be opposed to.<sup>142</sup> John's letter was couched in deferential tones thanking his father for his kindness and the education he was providing for him. He cited the opinion of his tutor that he should stop learning Greek as 'it is so contrarie to me & I to it' putting forward his argument that it was taking away from his time spent on logic, rhetoric, arithmetic and other sciences which would be more valuable for him to learn, in contrast to Greek which he would never be good at and did not believe was an essential subject to study. The young Anne Cooke, later Bacon, wrote to her mother about her difficulty in learning Italian, something her mother had 'often to reprove'. She submitted to parental authority by admitting she had 'perceived it my duty to prove howe muche the understandynge of youre wyll could worcke in me' to improve her education.<sup>143</sup> Aged twenty-two Anne showed adult independence in asserting her opinion and agreeing to obedience as a 'duty' above anything else. A more humorous letter contained in the Gawdy correspondence saw a son apologising for the bad Latin of his letter, hoping that his 'barbarous language' would move his father to laughter.<sup>144</sup> As letter-writing formed a crucial part of early modern education period, this kind of expression can be found in letters throughout the long sixteenth century. The change in tone of letters, from simple obedience on the part of the child, to a more equal, adult relationship reflects the experience of the parent-child relationship as children progressed through adolescence and highlights the inequality in the relationship.<sup>145</sup>

Simply being a parent commanded respect and prestige in early modern society, but evidence also shows children playing an active role in benefitting the status and reputations of their parents and wider family. They often became useful to their parents and took their place within the family network, particularly children in service of high-status men and women or at court. Elizabeth Manners, countess of Rutland used her daughter as an important link to the court of Elizabeth I. Bridget Manners

---

<sup>141</sup> BL Add. MS 36989 f. 1 (22 May 1579).

<sup>142</sup> Long. TH/VOL/I, f. 148 (23 Dec 1570).

<sup>143</sup> Gemma Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon* (Camden Fifth Series: vol. 44, 2013), p. 53 – 54 (1551).

<sup>144</sup> HMC Gawdy, p. 79 (8 May 1602).

<sup>145</sup> Ben-Amos, 'Reciprocal bonding', p. 22.



was a lady-in-waiting to the Queen in the 1590s and Elizabeth referred to the useful role her daughter performed in a letter to her cousin, 'I am grieved to see how unable I am to perform the services which I owe to the Queen, but I trust she will allow the same to be supplied by my poor daughter, who must satisfy for both.'<sup>146</sup> It is clear that Bridget was a useful contact for Elizabeth and went some way to appeasing the Queen on her behalf so that she need not be present at the court herself. Children could be useful in passing on news, especially those based in London or at court. However, this increased independence given to adolescent children, and the value they must have been aware they had as new members of the family networks, often led to conflict between children trying to assert their own authority against their parents. This was also an experience shared by parents and children throughout the early modern period as societal expectations of obedience and obligation remained crucial to family life. Margaret Paston in 1469 wrote to her son that she and her teenage daughter Margery were 'eythere of vs wery of othere' and urged him to find her a placement away from the household.<sup>147</sup> In her diary, Anne Clifford remembered an incident from 1603 when, aged thirteen, she was sent to lie in her chamber alone because of her mother's extreme anger.<sup>148</sup>

Parents who were separated from their children were not able to do this and had to rely on letters or messages passed on from others to express their displeasure. Contemporary of Margaret Paston, Thomas Stonor wrote to his son William asking him to send him some arrows with a word of caution, 'I must haue these redy in hast, and that hit be not ffaylyd as my trust is in yow.'<sup>149</sup> Later letters show William asking for forgiveness over the unknown incident which had caused his father's displeasure.<sup>150</sup> Honor Lisle was also required to discipline her children from afar, particularly her daughter Anne as she matured and developed her own importance at the royal court. Anne had never been shy of asking her mother for what she wanted, usually clothes or money. She was once refused money from her mother on the grounds she should 'give her mind too much to play.'<sup>151</sup> Carole Collier Frick argues when looking at adolescent masculinity that children were thought to be tempted by worldly vices such as gambling and spending money in the same way

---

<sup>146</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 318, (Nov 1593).

<sup>147</sup> Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 338 – 39 (3 April 1469).

<sup>148</sup> Clifford (ed.), *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 25.

<sup>149</sup> Carpenter (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290 – 1483*, pp. 190 – 191 (c.1468-9).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 221 (c. 1473).

<sup>151</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p. 157 (after 4 November 1535).

as adults.<sup>152</sup> It seems that in this case, girls were also capable of these sins. Parents were required to step in and provide moral guidance for them. This could be problematic as children grew more independent in thought and requested more items as Anne did. For example, she fairly forcefully requested a new gown when she was living in France: 'Madame, I know well that I am very costly unto you, but it is not possible to do otherwise'.<sup>153</sup> However, later, during her time in London, this confidence with requesting goods got her into trouble with her mother. A family friend reported back to Honor that Anne had received some pearls she had requested but was not happy with them because there were too few and they would not be of sufficient quality to make the gown she wanted. Honor seems to have been very angry with Anne for making this disobliging comment and her disapproval in the matter continued via her letters for nearly a month. Only employee John Husee's replies to her outrage survive but he commented in several letters that Anne was repentant and sorry to have her mother's displeasure.<sup>154</sup> The length of time for which Honor continued to bring up this issue suggests she was not happy with Husee acting in a parental role here, or felt he was not supporting her satisfactorily.

Expectations that young girls would act obediently to their parents endured. In 1582, John Herrick had sent his daughter Mary to keep her brother's house in London but requested her back after his marriage, as she was no longer needed. John 'marvell[ed]' that she did not come home after his requests to her brother and so wrote directly to her repeating several times that she ought to be obedient and was bound by duty to obey them and return home to do work in their house.<sup>155</sup> Mary seems to have responded to this stern letter but it is perhaps understandable that she attempted to put her father off for as long as possible and extend her time of relative freedom in London away from her parents. Adolescent children sometimes took the opportunity when away from their parents to make their own decisions, flouting the established rules of obligation and duty by which they were expected to behave.

These example illustrates some of the common problems with parenting at a distance and how it could be difficult for a parent to assert their authority and make

---

<sup>152</sup> Carole Collier Frick, 'Boys to Men: Codpieces and Masculinity in Sixteenth-Century Europe', *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, eds. Miller and Yavneh, pp. 157 – 79.

<sup>153</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, vol. 3, p. 150 – 51 (17 August 1535).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, vol. 5, p. 109 – 10 (19 April 1538); p. 115 – 17 (2 May 1538); p. 117 – 18 (5 May 1538); p. 127 (14 May 1538).

<sup>155</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 474 f. 73 (3 June 1582).

sure that their children really understood their feelings about their behaviour, when acting through others. It also shows us the tensions that could emerge in the parent-child relationship when children were on the brink of adulthood and beginning to assert their own authority. While at university, William Herrick wrote to his father when he and his tutor liked the colour of a gown he had sent, but not the velvet from which it was made since they thought it might stain with regular wear.<sup>156</sup> Stating his criticism as in line with his tutor's seems to have been a good strategy when dealing with a parent who would likely view the tutor as a reasoned adult voice. Anne Basset had felt sufficiently confident to criticise her mother in her own voice, but Honor still expected a degree of obedience from her daughter. Although advice letters and episodes of discipline are indicative of parental care and affection for children, obedience was of critical importance in the relationship between parent and adolescent child.<sup>157</sup> However, as Anne Basset became older and more successful at court, it can be seen that her relationship with her mother shifted. Anne became a favourite of Henry VIII and her comfortable position at court serving four of his wives was reliant on his favour. In 1540 she was not afraid to tell her mother that there was nothing she could do to influence the Queen to make a place at court for her sister, and was not rebuked for it.

Considering the letters of Katherine Paston to her son chronologically from his time at university between 1624 – 27 allows an in-depth consideration of the shift in a parent's relationship with their adolescent child, one handled with sensitivity and a more gradual evolution acknowledging William's maturity. Some letters suggest that Katherine made the bigger change in her attitude towards her son. In several letters from 1626 she apologised for failing to keep up their correspondence:

I could not omit this fittinge oportunyty, but will repayer my last weekes omision with my duple wrightinge to the for I am promised that this my letter shall com to the be saterday night. and then shallt thow haue two of min in on weeke which will make a peec of amends to the.<sup>158</sup>

William must have commented on her gap in writing so she felt she had to make it up to him by sending him an extra letter. There is definitely a sense that, although William continued to write to her as frequently, she increasingly found herself preoccupied with matters apart from her children, who now needed less of her time.

---

<sup>156</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 481 f. 44 (26 Oct 1613).

<sup>157</sup> Barbara Caine, 'Letters between Mothers and Daughters', *Women's History Review*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2015) p. 486 identifies this as a feature of mother-daughter correspondence but it can be applied more broadly to parent-child relationships.

<sup>158</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 88 (2 March 1626?).

Other evidence of this shift can be seen in that she directly sent him money and her letters included more adult discussion of political news, specifically rumours of a French invasion in March 1626.<sup>159</sup>

There was also a subtle change in her advice. In a later letter she warned William against pride, worrying that he might be influenced by other bachelors.<sup>160</sup> This concern seems much more based in a worry about adolescent personality rather than more basic advice to a younger teenager about diet and recreation. Katherine gradually acknowledged William's individuality, and that he might not follow the path she had intended for him. Initially she reassured him about his struggles with Latin and promised that he would find it easier over time, but he did not improve and she eventually accepted this and looked for alternatives, 'if thow canst not attayne to Learninge the Lattin tounge parfitly. yet bestow thy time in redinge good Inglish books which may furnish thy minde with delitfull good things.'<sup>161</sup> A letter sent by Katherine as William finished his degree shows her changed opinion about her son. She firmly stated her opinions, that he should continue his studies at Cambridge and her worries that a spell at home might inspire a wish for more freedom to spend time with his friends and amuse himself away from study.<sup>162</sup> However, this letter was very much a conversation between the two of them. She was not telling him to stay at the university but giving her advice hoping he felt the same way. There is also the implication that he might be somewhat adventurous and not be content at home and in the future might want to travel. Although she would not like it, she acknowledged the possibility, and that she would not be able to stop him from going.<sup>163</sup> Her last letter to him before he returned home shows that, despite her continuing dominant, parental role, she had to acknowledge the change in him:

I haue now sente for you home, I praye god blese you in euery good coorse if you will be of a patient minde, and giue eare to instruction, you shall know, that your company shall euer be most acseptable to me for I must deal playnly with you for your good I know youthe seekethe to soon affter to much

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 89 (March 1626?), p. 90 (March 1626?).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 99 (February 1627?).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 90 (March 1626?).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 101 (Late March 1627?).

<sup>163</sup> Other young men at this time chose to travel. For example, Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester's correspondence, found in Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, includes letters discussing his son's European tour with his new wife. William Paston did go on to travel the world in adulthood, after his mother's death, visiting Europe, Africa and Asia. (Hughey (ed.), 'Introduction', in *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 34).

libertye. you shall not wante that which is enowgh of it allways provided sumwhat that dothe concerne your owne good be done.<sup>164</sup>

She looked forward to his more adult company but still offered parental advice. He had been away for three years and she clearly felt that she must treat him in a more adult way, acknowledging the maturity he had gained in his time away. However, she stated that she would continue to give him advice when she felt he needed it. The survival of Katherine's letters suggest that they were valued enough by William to preserve them all. Although Katherine only appears to have kept two of his letters, one of these was likely his first letter to her from his initial days away at university.<sup>165</sup> That she chose to keep it perhaps indicates a sentimental attachment on her part to a memory of her son as a child before embarking on his life away from her. The voices of adolescents like William are evident, through their own voices and the reaction of adults to them. Adolescence was a transitional stage for both parents and children as they renegotiated the authority in the relationship towards further equality and reciprocity. This journey was one experienced more smoothly for some than for others. However, parental obligation and responsibility did not end as soon as a child reached a certain age, graduated from university, or passed other markers of the end of adolescence. The final section of this chapter considers how far parents continued their parenting role for their children after the initial phase of separation.

### **Parenting adult children**

As children entered their adult years, usually after finishing their formal education around the age of seventeen or eighteen, the parent-child relationship continued to be an important one in their lives. Aristocratic parents did not leave their children to provide for themselves immediately as they finished their educations; if anything they continued to dispense advice and to feel concern for their maturing offspring.<sup>166</sup> The tensions that we have seen between adolescents and their parents often continued into adulthood as parents continued to expect obedience from children who were increasingly taking on adult responsibilities and careers. However, in many cases the relationship also continued its path toward reciprocity as parents came to value the role their adult children could play in their lives.

---

<sup>164</sup> Hughey (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627*, p. 103 (July 1627).

<sup>165</sup> BL Add. MS 36989 f. 32 (26 January 1624).

<sup>166</sup> Rowland Whyte wrote to Robert Sidney of his children that he hoped God would 'make you long live to be careful of them' showing the expectation that they would need his care for as long as possible, Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, pp. 94 – 95 (25 November 1595).

For aristocratic boys, time at university was often followed by further training or socialisation, commonly in service placements, at the Inns of Court in London, or on tours of Europe. Travel abroad was believed to continue the growth and education of aristocratic young men although it also had its critics, particularly travel to certain areas.<sup>167</sup> William Cecil, Lord Burghley advised his son Robert that children should not 'pass the Alps for they shall learn nothing there but pride, blasphemy, and Atheism', articulating his concern that sending Protestant boys to Italy would risk corrupting them by close contact with the ungodly Papacy.<sup>168</sup> This concern about corrupting the spiritual health of young men was not shared by all. Protestant, as well as recusant Catholic, families sent their children as far as Italy on these tours.<sup>169</sup> Travel abroad meant that young men were separated even further from their parents who had less control over their behaviour. William Paston, son of the music collector Edward Paston, wrote to his father from Paris to ask if he could go to Italy to see the country and learn its language; he then planned to come back via Germany. Presumably this was a change from his original itinerary if he needed to ask permission and shows us that at least the basic itinerary had to be approved by a parent, as well as the reasons behind it.<sup>170</sup> There might have been practical reasons for this, as parents needed to know where they could reach their children with letters and money, and possibly to decide if they wanted to financially support the changes made to the itinerary, as well as making sure that their offspring were staying in suitable accommodation and undertaking suitable activities. George Manners utilised his powerful and influential uncle, the Earl of Shrewsbury to appeal to his father after changing his travel plans without prior approval, something he thought might be enough to lessen his 'fatherly love and affection.'<sup>171</sup> However, many letters are often fairly basic accounts of itineraries and confirmation of good health. As well as wishing to monitor their children's activities as far as possible, this kind of circumstantial detail must also have helped parents to imagine and locate their absent child and provide some reassurance and comfort. Bess of Hardwick's son and stepson took a European tour together in the 1570s and a letter home from

---

<sup>167</sup> HMC Bath, p. 43 (18 June 1583).

<sup>168</sup> *Practical Wisdom: or, The Manual of Life. The counsels of Eminent Men to Their Children* (London: 1824), p. 42 (c. 1584).

<sup>169</sup> ID 226, Henry Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, 4 November 1570, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226> ; BL Add. MS 27447 f. 153 (21 March 1614).

<sup>170</sup> BL Add. MS 27447 f. 153 (21 March 1614).

<sup>171</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 299 (13 May [1592?]).

Henry Cavendish is a good example of this type of letter.<sup>172</sup> He explained where they had travelled since his last letter and informed his mother and stepfather that they would stay in Padua until receiving a reply as to whether they should continue or return home. He claimed that they would 'accordynge to our dewtyes very wyllingly dooe any of thes'. Young men were usually sent away with servants and companions and stayed in the homes of family friends who could report back to parents. However, they probably had a fair amount of autonomy about what they chose to do when away. Although they reported back to their parents, they were located far enough away from them that they must have had a degree of independence.

Not all children travelled abroad but it was rare for them to return to the family home after their educations. Those who did could find it stressful to live as adults under the regime of their parents, like John Paston III who complained to his brother of the influence his mother's pastor had in the household when he was living there as an adult aged twenty-eight.<sup>173</sup> The late-medieval Pastons' ambitions to rise in social status required the cooperation of adult children and John and his brothers continued to remain closely involved in family business matters, particularly after the death of their father which will be discussed further in chapter three. However, those who continued to live apart from their parents, either in service, in further education, or in positions at court were not free from their parents' advice and teaching. Parents seem to have considered their duty to advise and instruct their children as a lifelong commitment. Anne Bacon's surviving correspondence with her son Anthony from the second half of the sixteenth century shows us a mother and son who renegotiated the balance of power in their relationship well into the adulthood of the child. This correspondence has been analysed by Katy Mair who argues that 'any suspicion or disagreement evident in their correspondence 'is the result of a perceived failure on the side of both parties to fulfil correctly their parental or filial obligations.'<sup>174</sup> The problem that can be seen from Anthony's point of view was of an over-controlling mother whose input into his life was excessive and got worse as he got older. However, evidence presented in this thesis shows that it was not unusual for parents to continue with their obligations of care and advice for their children. Anne referred to her sons as 'chylthern' in a letter of 1593 when Anthony

---

<sup>172</sup> ID 226, Henry Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, 4 November 1570, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=226>

<sup>173</sup> Davis (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers*, vol. 1, pp. 581 – 2 (16 October 1472).

<sup>174</sup> Mair, 'Material Lies', p. 59 – 60.

was thirty-five years old, and his brother Francis thirty-two.<sup>175</sup> A year previously she had sent Anthony an advice letter which closely mirrored those described above, which were usually sent to teenage sons. In it she gave advice about the friends and counsel he should keep, his spiritual devotion and his behaviour to others, reproaching that he 'too litle regarded your kinde and no simple mother's holsome advyse'.<sup>176</sup> Anthony suffered from gout and concern about his health figured in almost all of Anne's letters to him.<sup>177</sup> She advised him on diet, exercise, and remedies that she thought would alleviate his symptoms and the authority with which she gave this advice was linked to her role as mother. Anthony's father had also suffered with gout so Anne saw herself in a unique position to advise her son on an illness which she had experience treating as a wife and mother.<sup>178</sup> Anthony often took his mother's advice, thanking her for it and asking her to send him remedies, for example strawberries, which were believed to alleviate gout.<sup>179</sup> He claimed to be 'allwaies redye' to follow her advice and respect it 'as I ought', and Anne did go as far as to show her disapproval, for example when he moved into the city and she worried about the air and company there.<sup>180</sup> However, it does seem that, in accordance with Mair's observations, Anthony became frustrated with his mother's constant interference. In 1594 he sent her letters written in formal, deferential tones, appropriate from a son to his mother, but they are not the straightforward apologies they seem. Although referring to his 'tender care of your Ladyship's soule and reutation' he criticised her 'souveraigne desire to overrule your sonnes in all thinges, how litle soever yow understande eyther the grounde or the circumstances of their proceadings'.<sup>181</sup> Her reply to his letter, if there was one, does not survive. Although she had previously been praised for her motherly care, for example by Lord Burghley in 1593, it seems that after around 1594, her sons became less willing to heed her constant advice and accept her disciplinary letters.<sup>182</sup>

Others also implied to her that her natural, motherly concern might have become too intrusive on the lives of her adult sons. When Anthony was away in France staying with the Protestant theologian Michel Berault, Berault wrote to Anne to inform her that he understood her instinct to worry about her son:

---

<sup>175</sup> Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 136 (15 June 1593).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99 – 101 (3 February 1592).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 105 – 06, 106 – 07, 112 – 13, 114 – 15, 142 and more (c. 1592 – 3).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 162 – 3 (4 Feb [1594]).

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143 (15 August [1593]), pp. 107 – 8 (29 June 1592).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155 – 6 (2 November 1593), pp. 179 – 80 (April 1594).

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186 – 7 (12 July 1594).

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146 – 7 (29 August 1593).



it is not surprising since you have this most precious dear son not only far from your sight but also from your protection, you suspect and fear that everything is calamitous and unlucky [...] so you plan, try and strive with all your efforts to bring him back to you as soon as possible; of which is nothing foreign from or at odds with the true role of a parent.<sup>183</sup>

However, Berault's letter was intended to dissuade Anne and inform her that Anthony would remain in France, as he wished. Berault was a minister who developed strong links with the Huguenot elite in Southern France.<sup>184</sup> He may have regarded an alliance with an English noble family as worth pursuing. Equally, Anthony, who was in France undertaking work for Spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham may have valued Berault as a contact.<sup>185</sup> Although undoubtedly reflecting parental protectiveness, Anne may have been right to worry about Anthony's covert activities in France. The replies from Berault might have been intended to deflect Anne from a course which might have jeopardised Anthony's cover, and the success of his mission. Nevertheless, her letters show that she still regarded the safety of her son as one of her responsibilities as his mother, despite his age. In 1594, Nicolas Trott, barrister and friend of Anthony, wrote to Anne acknowledging that Anthony's affairs, caused her anxiety and grief, 'in accordance with your motherly love, I am nevertheless sure that your good sense will unfold'.<sup>186</sup> So although it was widely acknowledged that it was understandable and acceptable for parents to continue to interfere and involve themselves in their adult children's lives, there was also a sense that this could go too far.

However, Anne Bacon was not the only parent who exercised control over adult children. In 1581 Bassingbourne Gawdy wrote a long letter to his father apologising profusely for 'most grievous my unthriftiness of growing to be indebted'.<sup>187</sup> His letter was full of his apologies, appealing to his father's goodness, patience and love, even though he was unworthy of it because of his shameful actions. Bassingbourne's uncle wrote to appeal on behalf of his nephew, writing, 'He does not desire to live unless he has your favour'.<sup>188</sup> George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury became embroiled in a huge disagreement with his eldest son Gilbert, also in the 1580s,

---

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. 89 – 93 (19 July [1585 – 89]); pp. 195 – 7 (5 December 1594).

<sup>184</sup> Philip Conner, *Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and Southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 44 – 45.

<sup>185</sup> For more details on Anthony's activities in France see Lisa Jardine and Alan Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon* (New York: Gollancz, 1998) pp. 32 – 50.

<sup>186</sup> Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 189 – 92 (3 August 1594).

<sup>187</sup> BL Add. MS 36989 (20 April [1581]).

<sup>188</sup> HMC Gawdy, p. 16 (18 April 1581).

partly caused by Gilbert's financial situation. Gilbert appealed to his father after asking for money that, 'My days of payment are now at hand and I put myself at your mercy, resolved to change my manner of living, and never more to trouble you with such entreaties.'<sup>189</sup> George replied angrily, accusing Gilbert of obscuring the truth about his finances and working against him with his stepmother. He stated:

Theis are no small matters and howe you should soo spend all this and bring yourself soo farre into debte I cannot but mervail, and with grief thinke of yt. Well, in hope of better hereafter, for her Majesties sake I will doo thus much now, which you knowe is a gret deale more then your behavior and desertes have geven me cause.<sup>190</sup>

The situation deteriorated until Gilbert left court. He wrote to Lord Burghley that the 'feare and terror' of 'the tempest of his [father's] wordes' had kept him away.<sup>191</sup> Burghley attempted to intervene by supporting Gilbert in a letter to his father, arguing that he did not have enough to live on as the heir to his line and so was not able to keep out of debt.<sup>192</sup> This advice and those of other friends seems to have helped repair the relationship between George and Gilbert. Several historians have noted the potential for breakdowns in father-son relationships in this period. Houlbrooke's analysis of the diaries of Puritan ministers concludes that adolescence may have been a difficult period as fathers attempted to maintain surveillance of their sons' behaviour.<sup>193</sup> He states that this may not be the case for all social classes but Heal and Holmes also note these tensions in gentry families, usually over issues of inheritance and money.<sup>194</sup> Issues over money were clearly important and children often relied on their parents to support them financially and pay any debts they incurred, but these examples show that the issue was not solely a concern for material wellbeing. Pollock's work on anger demonstrates that anger was a responsible reaction to a family member threatening the welfare of their family through irresponsible behaviour.<sup>195</sup> This certainly seems to have been the case with George Talbot's reaction to his son's debts. However, sons were often deeply worried about offending their fathers and saw that their disobedience over these matters would have consequences for their reputations and standing within the family. Although outside commentators recognised that anger was a justified response in these situations, they nevertheless appealed to parents to show

---

<sup>189</sup> HMC Bath pp. 57 – 58 (17 September 1585).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. pp. 58 – 59 (24 September 1585).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p. 71 (24 July 1586).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 87 – 88 (6 March 1587/8).

<sup>193</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 12.

<sup>194</sup> Heal and Holmes, p. 81.

<sup>195</sup> Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships...', p. 582.

toleration. In both the above cases, others stepped in to curb the behaviour of parents, showing both that parents could be criticised for involving themselves too much in their adult children's lives, but also reacting too angrily when they failed to act like the responsible adults they were expected to be. Parenting adult children was a fine balance between the obligations associated with the roles of parent, child, and adult.

Although the period after adolescence could be one of tension and crisis for a parent and child, this period could see the start of a reciprocal relationship developing where children became valuable in supporting their parents' affairs and networks. Although Anne Bacon may have taken her involvement in son Anthony's life too far according to some, it was in her interest to influence him. He and his brother had positions at court and in Parliament where many of her relatives and friends also did business. But she was equally important to Anthony as she lived on the lands he would inherit and supported his claims and interests there. For parents who were more isolated than Anne Bacon, in terms of location and networking opportunities, correspondence with an adult child could be a comforting experience. In the earlier part of the correspondence of the Herrick family, John Herrick's correspondence with his two sons living in London shows a relationship where children could help their parents, both with the comfort of writing to them and keeping their relationship strong, but also through their improved social position. Eldest son, Nicholas Herrick, had moved from Leicester to London to work as a goldsmith, and his younger brother, William, served him as an apprentice before setting up his own successful business and eventually being elected a member of Parliament, knighted, and reaching the position of principal jeweller to the King. Their father John Herrick wrote to them often throughout the 1580s thanking them for the gifts they sent to him of food and clothing and frequently stating that he longed to see them but he and their mother were too old to make the journey.<sup>196</sup> These letters have the tone and content of parents who wanted to keep a relationship with their children, and increasingly relied on them for material support, but also emotional support as hearing from them gave them comfort when they could not see them. This was his way of maintaining a relationship with his adult children. He stated that they were missed at family gatherings and clearly felt their separation, but it is also evident that he needed the support from their London connections and location.<sup>197</sup> In 1584 John found himself

---

<sup>196</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 474, f. 68 (1578), f. 72 (29 October 1582), f. 74 (9 December [1582?]), f. 81 (27 Feb 1583), f. 82 (21 March 1583), f. 83 (2 February 1584).

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. f. 83 (28 August 1584).

involved in a Chancery case where he needed his son's help to find him counsel, and in 1586 asked his son Nicholas in a long letter showing his concern about his financial situation to assist him in ensuring some of his debts were paid.<sup>198</sup> So although parents often faced difficult situations when trying to maintain their authority over children who were growing up and increasingly holding positions of authority themselves, we can also see that adult children could act as a support for their ageing parents. Conduct literature warned against this relationship becoming too familiar, that 'Children should not be as familiar with their parents as to seem neighbour and neighbour rather than father and son.'<sup>199</sup> But it also acknowledged the duties children had to their parents in their adulthood.<sup>200</sup> This final section has largely considered parents' relationships with their sons in the period following adolescence as boys were more likely to have a longer education. Girls commonly married in their late teens/early twenties and the effect of this rite of passage in the life cycle is considered in the following chapter. But considering these parents and their sons shows us that parents could still have considerable influence, and were seen as having a right to exercise this, although not if they were too intrusive, or harsh with their discipline. The status of child remained for these young men as one affecting their own personal authority and the decisions they could make for themselves, although societal expectations of the role of parent did alter to acknowledge their independence.

## Conclusion

Separation of family members was common in aristocratic family life and parents often became accustomed to parenting at a distance, as one or both parents were separated from their children. Parents' primary duty to their children was to facilitate their socialisation into adults who would be capable of running landed estates and serving in government positions. Their responsibilities covered various tasks such as arranging a suitable tutor or placement, supporting children financially, sending clothes, giving advice on healthcare, and religious instruction. These roles were

---

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. f. 86 (2 February 1584); f. 90 (1 July 1586).

<sup>199</sup> John Dod, *The bright star which leadeth wise men to our Lord Jesus Christ, or, A familiar and learned exposition on the ten commandments gathered from the mouth of a faithfull pastor by a gracious young man, sometime scholler in Cambridge* (London: 1603, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), p. 4.

<sup>200</sup> Batt *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 27, mostly stressed that they should remain obedient but also included responsibility for delivering parents from prison and being taken by their enemies if necessary.

often gendered as mothers were seen as responsible for healthcare, and increasingly for religious instruction as Protestant ideals promoted religious teaching within the household. The growth of parental advice literature in this period also shows the universal belief that parents had a duty to pass on their wisdom and experience to adolescent children. In reality, most parents were not able to do this alone and the ideal image presented of a father and mother advising children based on gendered lines was not as simple to follow in real life. Parents relied on a wide range of family members, friends and employees to assist them in their goal of educating and socialising their children successfully. However, the level of care shown by many parents in continuing to provide advice and support is often indicative of a close relationship, and letters between separated parents and children were a source of support for both. Behind formulaic letter structures and deferential greetings and signatures, parents and children enjoyed discourses where they could share news and maintain familial ties. Children continued to rely on their parent's support but also began to assert their own agency during this stage of the life cycle which saw the beginning of their growth towards adult independence. To do this they were required to negotiate authority with their parents. Parents had obligations towards their children which they considered themselves bound to uphold for life but children could come to resent or act against this control. Adolescence could cause a crisis in the relationship as parents attempted to assert authority over increasingly independent children. This could continue into young adulthood as children took on other roles in their careers but were still subordinate to the wishes and instruction of their parents. The following chapter considers the impact of marriage on the parent-child relationship. Marriage usually followed education for aristocratic children, particularly girls, and this event in the individual life cycle was one which changed the dynamic of the parent-child relationship as children took on the role of spouse, and often as parents themselves.

## **Chapter Two - Marriage and Married Life**

In 1594, Thomas Thynne, heir to Sir John Thynne of Longleat, Wiltshire, clandestinely married Maria Touchet, daughter of George Touchet, Baron Audley. Thomas and Maria were sixteen years old at the time of their marriage and had met when Thomas was a student at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and Maria was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth I. The marriage was only a secret to the Thynne family and appears to have been encouraged and planned at least by Maria's mother, Lucy. Thomas's parents, John and Joan, were extremely angry when the news reached them almost a year later and made all attempts to have the marriage annulled. The case reached the Court of Arches in late 1590s and went on until 1605 when the validity of the marriage was confirmed.<sup>1</sup> Joan Thynne saw Lucy's role in the marriage as crucial and wrote to her that:

it is no small time that I have endured of discomfoting grief, my son was not long mine but wrongfully detained from me before he had either years or experience to judge what was fit in so weighty a course [...] I must lay the fault on your Ladyship, and take it for a heavy cross in this world.<sup>2</sup>

Lucy had taken the initiative in secretly arranging a match she believed suitable for her daughter, but in doing so had removed the ability of Thomas's mother to do the same for him. As will be discussed below, Thomas himself also played a crucial role, if not in arranging the marriage, in ensuring that its validity was upheld, despite his parents' disapproval. This crisis point in their family had repercussions for their relationships for the rest of their lives. Parental responsibility and the obedience of the child were crucial to ideals of marriage formation but they were regularly challenged and tested as children asserted their own authority and began to act as adults. Choosing a partner for your child was an important aspect of parenting and dynastic politics in the late medieval and early modern elite classes. In terms of domestic authority, children were expected to obey their parents in this decision, one that was crucial to the enhancement and development of a family's name and reputation, and also one that set the course of their adult lives.<sup>3</sup> Craig Muldrew's work on the culture of credit argues that early modern ethics 'meant that wealth was

---

<sup>1</sup> Alison Wall, 'For love, money or politics? A clandestine marriage and the Elizabethan court of Arches', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 38 (1995), pp. 511 – 33 is a comprehensive analysis of the Thynne family records of the case. Although it is unclear whether the Court of Arches commonly heard cases like this, as its surviving records only date back to 1666, Wall suggests that the rank of those concerned probably contributed to the case being heard there.

<sup>2</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, p. 28 (8 August 1602).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 43.

gained through reputation,' and, 'more than anything credit was a public means of social communication and circulating judgement about the value of other members of communities.'<sup>4</sup> As households were the basic economic unit, credit became synonymous with reputation.<sup>5</sup> Muldrew argues that there was not a clear distinction between economic and social transactions. They were linked by this culture of credit as social transactions such as marriage arrangement had an impact on a family's economic and business success.<sup>6</sup> A study of parenting supports this theory. Credit was not only about individual reputations but the reputation of one's household, and wider family.<sup>7</sup> Miriam Slater and Sara Heller Mendelson's discussion of seventeenth-century marriage argues around the question of whether family life at this time, described by Slater as 'hierarchical and authoritarian' placed any priority on romance and emotional gratification when arranging marriages.<sup>8</sup> Alliance through marriage played a crucial role in widening family networks and could be critical to a family's upward social mobility. Children who disobeyed their parents and sought out their own marriages could jeopardise this, causing damage to the family's reputation and collective credit, but it is also possible to see that parents did consider the happiness of their children when arranging matches and a process of courtship, even if supervised and following formal conventions, was desirable. Mendelson states that elopements and clandestine marriages are evidence of this which is certainly true and will be considered in this chapter, but this priority can also be seen in arranged marriages. Fundamentally the aims of parents were similar throughout the long sixteenth century when marrying their children and parental obedience was an enduring idea throughout the period that children were expected to adhere to. It later became a state concern with the Hardwick Marriage Act in the eighteenth century attempting enshrine parental consent into law. Drawing together case studies from the 1450s to 1620s of well-known families like the Pastons and Thynnes, who are often considered in isolation, makes evident that these concerns existed before the

---

<sup>4</sup> Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> Although this largely fits with patriarchal theories about finance and marriage arrangement, Shepard has argued that masculinity in credit culture was not wholly straightforward; see 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580 – 1640', *Past and Present*, vol. 167 (2000), pp. 75 – 106.

<sup>8</sup> Miriam Slater, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, vol. 72 (1976), pp. 25 – 54; Sara Heller Mendelson, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, no. 85 (1979), pp. 126 – 35; Miriam Slater, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England: A Rejoinder', *Past and Present*, no. 85 (1979), pp. 136 – 40.

advent of Puritan advice literature and the Protestant 'invention' of the companionate marriage.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter considers the involvement of parents in the marriage arrangements of their children, and their lives as married men and women. Firstly, it considers the 'ideal marriage' and how parents and children negotiated marriage arrangements which fit with traditional ideas about parental obligation and childhood obedience found in conduct literature. Historians have looked at the process of courtship and marriage, and most acknowledge that parents were involved in a significant way.<sup>10</sup> This chapter shows not only that parents were heavily involved in marriage arrangements, but that these arrangements and the suitability of potential spouses were judged on parenting practices. By the time of marriage, parents should have ensured that their offspring had reached a level of education that enabled them to run and maintain their own careers and households. Not having done so would have jeopardised the quality of a child's match. The characters and reputations of parents themselves also had an impact on a successful match and they were judged as much as the potential bride and groom. There were prescriptive rules for how marriage arrangements should be conducted and carried out. Barbara Harris argues that, for women, the arrangement of their marriage was 'probably the moment when the combined force of the patriarchal structures under which they lived subjugated them most effectively and with the most enduring results.'<sup>11</sup> However, not all children accepted this subjugation and marriage could be a point of crisis within a family when children challenged the control of their parents. Tension was often caused by children who did not accept parental authority and decided to make their own choices. Aristocratic children were usually married in their late teens or early twenties. This meant that individuals were on the cusp of adulthood and, as adolescents, were beginning to assert adult authority over their lives. However, their parents expected obedience over this crucial event in the life course. David Herlihy's seminal article on the family has explored this idea of crisis and suggested that marriages could provoke intergenerational conflict, particularly between fathers and

---

<sup>9</sup> Stone, *The Family Sex and Marriage in England*.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Britnell, *The Closing of the Middle Ages? England 1471 – 1529* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Eric Josef Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*; Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Adair, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England*.

<sup>11</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 59.



sons.<sup>12</sup> There is a consensus that marriage was a crucial part of the medieval and early modern life cycle, and, as with other rites of passage, could cause tension within families.<sup>13</sup> The correspondence between family members relating to marriage demonstrates that this pivotal moment of the life course could permanently re-define the parent-child relationship. Families across the time period are compared as part of a wider discussion about obligation and duty in the parent-child relationship and the ways in which children could assert their own authority and challenge societal rules and norms. This thesis draws together case studies of specific families to see what we can tell about families more generally over this period. Episodes like the clandestine Thynne marriage are rarely compared with earlier examples but by doing this we can see that similar themes of parental responsibility and obligation are evident. Exploring a crisis which occurred over this crucial stage in the family life cycle allows us to explore further the emotional relationships of parents and children. Although anger and upset were caused by the transgression of children from expected behaviour, these emotions were often bound up with expressions of parental love and concern for future wellbeing. The continuation of parental involvement in children's lives after marriage is also indicative of this care and love, as well as being important for family reputation and credit.

In terms of the family life cycle, marriage can be seen as the starting point which created a new family unit. However, marriage did not always signal the end of one family's course and the start of another, but marked one more event in the process of generational development. The second part of this chapter considers marriage as a crisis point where authority between parents and children went through a period of tension and renegotiation. Finally, the chapter explores relationships between parents and their adult, married children. Although marriage was often considered a rite of passage signalling the entry to adulthood, parents remained important parts of their children's lives. This chapter demonstrates the crucial role parents played in providing financial and emotional support for children of both genders and of all ages. That parents and children both had obligations to each other did not change as children entered adulthood, but these responsibilities shifted and were challenged by the child's status as adult, spouse, and when they became parents themselves.

---

<sup>12</sup> David Herlihy, 'The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment', Carol Neel (ed.), *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 192 – 213.

<sup>13</sup> Katie Barclay, "And Four Years Space, being Man And Wife, they Loveingly Agreed": Balladry and Early Modern Understandings of Marriage', in *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, eds. Ewan and Nugent, pp. 23 – 33, also sees this in Scottish examples of marriage arrangement.

Historians have more recently begun to consider the parent-child relationship at later stages in the life course, rather than focusing on parental relationships with young children. Marriage is usually seen as the starting point for 'adult' life, and Foyster's notable article on parental relationships with adult children argues that since parents were a key part of marriage negotiations they would continue to be important to their children after the marriages had taken place.<sup>14</sup> This chapter shows that a child's first marriage began to shift the initial dependence of children on their parents. As well as being a ritual marker in the development of the individual, marriage could also indicate the beginning of more fluid relationships within the immediate family. Although it is evident that parents continued to care for their children, the early modern culture of credit also meant that the behaviour of adult, married children could still have an impact on the reputation of their birth family. So parents continued to take an interest in their children's lives and financial matters for this reason. The relationship between a parent and child continued to adapt as parents moved into old age. Children found themselves with obligations to care for their elderly parents, but parents also took on extra responsibilities to care for grandchildren, a continuation of their parental obligations to the next generation.

### **Marriage arrangement**

Arranging a good marriage for your child was one of the most important obligations parents had for their children. Amongst sovereigns, marriage arrangement was usually conducted in accordance with strict dynastic principles where alliance with suitable families was crucial and could affect wider European politics.<sup>15</sup> For the aristocracy, this decision had an impact on a smaller but still significant scale as it changed the networks, financial situation, and reputation of the family as a whole, bringing them into alliances with other important families at the heart of the English political system. It was an extremely important decision and expectations of the process of marriage arrangement are commonly found in conduct literature about parenting and the correct upbringing of children, and in popular parental advice literature. Juan Luis Vives' work *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called the Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1529), has a substantial section advising young women how to behave when their parents are arranging their marriage. Mainly that, 'it becometh not a maid to talk where her father and mother be in communication

---

<sup>14</sup> Foyster, 'Parenting Was for Life, Not Just for Childhood', p. 317.

<sup>15</sup> Ben Wiebracht, 'First-cousin Marriage in Tudor and Stuart England: 1540 – 1688', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2015), pp. 24 – 38, is one recent piece of research which shows the lengths monarchs would go to ensure they could strengthen their dynasties by marrying, even within 'prohibited degrees' of marriage to those related to them.

about her marriage, but to leave all that care and charge wholly unto them which love her.<sup>16</sup> Vives acted as a tutor to Mary Tudor and, as the original text was dedicated to her mother, Katherine of Aragon, was clearly influenced by Catholic ideas about marriage and parental consent. Its publication at the height of Henry VIII and Katherine's divorce proceedings gives it a political significance, perhaps a publication intended to show support for Katherine and the traditional values which she was fighting for. However, there is much continuity in later works by Protestant writers dealing with the issue of parental consent and marriage. Puritan writer William Perkins's text *Christian Oeconomie* was written in the 1590s and published in 1609. Although he stressed the importance of the couple consenting to the marriage, he also stated that, 'private contracts that are made without free and lawful consent of parents are not only unprofitable and unlawful but even by the law of God mere nullities.'<sup>17</sup> In the published sermons of Henry Smith, another Puritan preacher, he also spent time debating the importance of parental consent in marriage, concluding that obedience to parents was important and that honouring them in accepting their choice of spouse was a laudable way to honour them.<sup>18</sup> Opinions about parental authority in this area were shared on the continent as a 1614 translation of advice by the French writer Ayrault shows. Like other contemporary texts it emphasised parental authority in marriage arrangement.<sup>19</sup> The increasing importance placed on patriarchal authority by Protestant reformers may have made writers more determined to emphasise that children should not marry without parental consent.

Protestant writer Charles Gibbon's work introduces the idea of reciprocity by stating that although children should obey their parents, parents in turn should not force their children to marry against their wills.<sup>20</sup> Written in 1591 this work shows that the

---

<sup>16</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called the Instruction of a Christian Woman*, translated by Richard Hyrde (London: 1529). This translation was reprinted eight times before 1592. Translator Hyrde had been a tutor in the More household so presumably translated the work with the patronage of Thomas More. This also suggests that, similarly to Vives, he was in favour of educating girls as it is well documented that More's daughters were highly educated women for their time.

<sup>17</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Smith, *The Sermons of Mr Henry Smith, sometime minister of St Clement Danes, London*, vol. 1 (London: 1866), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Ayrault, *A discourse for parents honour, and authoritie written to reclaime a counterfeit Jesuite*, trans. J.Budden (1614); Jacques LeGrand, *Boke of Good Manners* (1487); For further information on early modern literature concerning parental consent and marriage see Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: Arnold, 1995), pp. 178 – 82.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Gibbon, *A Work worth the Reading. Wherein is containd, fiue profitable and pithy Questions, very expedient, aswell for Parents ot perceiue howe to bestowe their Children in marriage, and to dispose their goods at their death: as for all other Persons to receiue great*

wishes of young adults were understood and judged to be important. In a publication from the same year, Bartholomew Batt also stated that children had 'libertie, to [...] giue their consents vnto their contractes in marriage, and that their Parents ought not to force them against their willes.', although he did stress at the same time that children should not marry without their parents' consent.<sup>21</sup> It was not unusual for conduct manuals to have sections aimed at adult children explaining how far they should be obedient to their parents.<sup>22</sup> Parental authority was a cornerstone of family and Christian life, due to its inclusion in the Ten Commandments, but parents were not expected to act tyrannically and control their children's lives to an extreme degree. Although some writers only stressed the importance of obedience to parents, both parents and children had a responsibility to act according to society's rules and were obligated to take account of each other's opinions in this important decision.<sup>23</sup> A 1589 pamphlet by Puritan writer and preacher John Stockwood shows contemporary awareness of the concept of the life cycle in sixteenth-century society. He offered the advice, 'Doe therefore as thou wouldest be done vnto: Marie with the consent of thy parentes, as thou wouldest that thy children should doe with thine,' thereby acknowledging that marriage arrangement was part of a family life cycle, and while children might resent parental prescription, they would want their own children to obey in the future.<sup>24</sup> In his published advice letter to his son, Walter Raleigh spent some time offering advice on choosing a wife. Although he offered the advice in a parental capacity, that he makes suggestions for the type of wife his son should choose, using phrases like 'thou shalt judge' and 'if thou percieve', suggests that he anticipated his son having some input into the decision.<sup>25</sup>

---

*profit by the rest of the matters herein expressed* (London: 1591); Charles Gibbon was likely a clergyman in Bury St Edmunds who attended Cambridge University, although little is known about his life; Alsager Vian, 'Gibbon, Charles (fl. 1589–1604)', rev. Elizabeth Goldring, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10587>, accessed 5 June 2015]; David Atkinson, 'Marriage under compulsion in English Renaissance drama', *English Studies*, vol. 6 (1986), pp. 483 – 504.

<sup>21</sup> Batt, *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques LeGrand, *Booke of Good Manners* (1487); Dod, *The bright star which leadeth* (1603), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Batt, *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 99, Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 76 stated that it was against 'naturall equite' for children to go against their parent's wishes.

<sup>24</sup> Stockwood, *A Bartholmew Fairing for Parentes* (1589), pp. 17 – 18; This is also found in Dod, *The bright star which leadeth* (1603), p. 4 as he writes that disobedient children would go on to have disobedient children themselves.

<sup>25</sup> *Sir Walter Raleighs instructions to his sonne and to posterity* (1632), pp. 21 – 22; William Cecil also offered similar advice in his published advice letter to his son, *Practical Wisdom* p. 39 – 41.

Parents customarily initiated and negotiated matches with both mothers and fathers playing crucial roles. Fathers were usually consulted about the financial aspects of marriage arrangement and were responsible for the payment, or receipt of dowries.<sup>26</sup> Women used their female networks to find and arrange suitable matches for their children, which was one of the most important aspects of their role as mothers.<sup>27</sup> Parents' own reputations were crucial to the success of the proposals. In the fifteenth century, John Paston's connection to Margaret Mautby in 1440 was a model courtship and marriage. The couple appear to have liked each other well enough and both families were pleased with the match. In a formally and neatly written letter, suggesting it may have been intended to be kept as evidence of the marriage-making process, Agnes Paston reported almost verbatim to her husband the meeting of her son John I and his prospective bride:

And as for þe furste aqweyntaunce be-tween John Paston and þe seyde gentilwomman, she made hym gentil chere in gyntyl wyse and seyde he was verrayly yowre son. And so I hope þer shal nede no gret treté be-twyxe hym.<sup>28</sup>

Here, Margaret is reported as describing her future husband in terms of his father, assuming that if the father had a pleasant character, then his son would also. We know that parents were involved in the legal and economic aspects of marriage arrangement but here it seems that the relationship between the couple was described and thought of in terms of their parents and family reputation as well. Similarities can be found over a century later in the Thynne correspondence. In 1575, Sir John Thynne began arrangements to marry his son and heir, also John, to Joan Hayward, daughter of Sir Rowland Hayward. During their courtship, Joan's opinion of her prospective husband was reported as follows by a family friend:

---

<sup>26</sup> BL Add. MS 15552, f. 1 (23 December 1578); HMC Rutland p. 284 (16 November 1590), p. 413 (26 October 1608); HMC Bath p.44 (1 August 1583); BL Add. MS 78272 f. 40 – 41 (1584).

<sup>27</sup> Harris, 'Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of English Aristocratic Women, 1450 – 1550', p. 21; Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 378 (11 June 1477), p. 174 (13 November, Probably 1463); CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/149, 150 (c. 1560?) ; ID 148, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Walsingham, 7 February 1582/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=1488> ; Cecil Papers 70/66 (30 May 1599).

<sup>28</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 26 (20 April, probably 1440); this letter was probably written by a secretary although contains the ambiguous comment that it was written 'for defaute of a good secretar' perhaps an admission that it had not been redrafted or edited as usual, or as Daybell suggests in 'Medieval Women's Letters 1350-1500', p. 179 that she had been forced to use someone other than a trusted secretary.

I talked with her and demanded of her how she did like of you and your son; of you she answered she had heard and she saw in you to be a grave and wise man, wherefore she did like the better of your son, for she thought he could not digress from your bringing him up as she hath heard you have done.<sup>29</sup>

Like Margaret Mautby/Paston's comments over one hundred years earlier, Joan described her future husband's attributes by linking them directly with those of his father. Both women expressed their interest and approval of their future husbands by complimenting the good qualities that they had inherited from their fathers. In the mid-sixteenth century, Thomas Kitson, earl of Bath, also took into account another father's reputation when arranging a match for his son. He wrote to his wife that Lord Paget, the father of the proposed groom, was a 'lovyng & frendlye gentyllman' also proving that a parent's qualities were important when considering a match between children.<sup>30</sup> Honesty and trust were crucial in building up credit relationships with others so the personal qualities of the family which your child was marrying into were an important aspect of choosing a suitable match and ensuring your child (and family) were allied with a successful family.<sup>31</sup> After the Reformation, families operated within networks of others in their religious confession and strengthened these ties through marriage. For Catholic families, building up credit within their community could be even more crucial as their networks helped them to survive in a period where they faced increasing sanctions because of their religion.<sup>32</sup> But all families had the same concerns when arranging marriages, that it enabled their social mobility and increased their wealth and influence.

In the above letter from Thomas Kitson, he also wrote that his son 'dothe fancye so well the [...] gentyllwoman' who was his proposed bride.<sup>33</sup> This consideration was also an important one for parents and there is much evidence in family letters that the wishes of children were taken into account when finalising marriage matches. Conduct literature which advised parents not to force marriages on their children seems to have been reflective of most aristocratic parents who often commented on whether their children liked their proposed spouse. Although marriages in this class and this period were largely about financial concerns and improving the status of

---

<sup>29</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, pp. 54 – 55 (29 July 1575).

<sup>30</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/89 (3 May 1557).

<sup>31</sup> Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*, p. 148 – 49.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Cogan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c. 1560 – 1620', in *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), eds. Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, pp. 69 – 91.

<sup>33</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/89 (3 May 1557).

families, the idea that spouses should at least like each other, even if they were not true love matches, was a pervasive one. As has been shown above, the Paston family, who are usually associated with a ruthless determination to rise in the social ranks, partly through marriages, still reported that their son John liked his proposed bride.<sup>34</sup> This John's son, John III, was later the subject of the famous 'valentine' letter of 1477 where his proposed bride, Margery Brews, wrote to him to express how much she wanted to marry him and was in the process of convincing her father to finalise the contract.<sup>35</sup> However, this letter is not the romantic gesture that it first appears. It was written by a secretary of Margery's father in neat and formal secretary hand. Its formality is at odds with the personal, intimate message which suggests these kinds of letters may have been a conventional part of courtship and another means of sorting out any difficulties that arose in negotiations. It certainly should not be read as private communication between the couple. As has been shown in analysis of the Paston letters, women's letter-writing was often a collaborative process and it is possible that Margery composed this letter with her mother.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it still represents the importance placed on a couple developing a positive relationship through the courtship process, albeit in a formal, supervised manner. When arranging the match between Ann Coningsby and Sir Robert Harley in c. 1603, when Robert was in his early twenties, her father Thomas corresponded with both Robert and his mother and father about the match.<sup>37</sup> The match was plagued by similar financial problems faced by the Pastons over a hundred years earlier as the Harleys felt Coningsby was not offering enough money as a dowry payment.<sup>38</sup> But eventually Thomas Coningsby agreed to increase the portion according to the 'proportion of love' and in accordance with his reputation as a kind father and respecting friend.<sup>39</sup> He also mentioned his view of marriage as 'principally contracted by love and affection'. Problems continued and the match was broken off. Robert Harley criticised Thomas Coningsby warning him, 'look that you deal with others better than you have done with me or else you will hardly get a good husband for your daughter,' showing that a father's behaviour could directly impact

---

<sup>34</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 26 (20 April, probably 1440).

<sup>35</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 662 – 63 (February 1477); Phillips, *Medieval Maidens*, p. 184; This letter is the oldest surviving valentine's letter in English <http://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item126579.html>

<sup>36</sup> Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, p. 153 shows that it was part of a group of letters sent at around the same time from her mother using the same secretary and containing similar language, images and tone.

<sup>37</sup> HMC Portland p. 1 (1603 – 4).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2 (24 December 1604).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2 (24 December 1604).

his daughter's prospects.<sup>40</sup> Robert also took the bold step of writing directly to Ann with these criticisms, which she was allowed to read with her parents' permission.<sup>41</sup> That he wrote to Ann suggests her involvement in the whole business, and although she was limited by her parents' prerogative, she must have had some input into the proceedings.

Adult children were sometimes allowed to arrange their own marriages, particularly young men of the gentry class of whom there are examples from the late middle ages to the early seventeenth century. In the 1470s Margaret Paston took great pains to see her daughters married but had nowhere near the level of input for her eldest son, John II, who arranged his own negotiations.<sup>42</sup> Robert Willoughby petitioned the father of the woman he wanted to marry directly when negotiations with his father had broken down c. 1533.<sup>43</sup> In the Herrick family of the 1580s, John Herrick heard by letter that his son Nicholas had married.<sup>44</sup> He sent wishes of joy and comfort to the couple and apologised that he and Nicholas's mother were not able to travel from Leicester to London for the wedding because of the short days and foul weather. Here, Nicholas must have arranged his marriage independently; a privilege that may only have been available to adult sons but nevertheless demonstrates that young people did sometimes have complete agency over their marriage choices. When Robert Harley married his cousin Brilliana Conway in 1623, when he was aged forty-four and she twenty-five, he also engaged in direct contact with her before the wedding, as well as supportive correspondence with her father.<sup>45</sup> Sir Edward Conway wrote of finding it 'in my heart to allay my daughter to raise your valew', stating that the 'bargaine' of the marriage was 'equally made' with her and finally that he would be honoured to have him as a son-in-law.<sup>46</sup> The two marriage arrangements for Robert Harley were dealt with in a combination of parents and children cooperating to further, or break off, a match.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 3 (19 Jan 1604/5).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 3 – 4 (8 May 1605; 19 May 1605).

<sup>42</sup> No letters survive to suggest that she ever suggested a potential bride for him or tried to organise any matches, although she did enquire about some of his negotiations to marry Anne Haute; Ann S. Haskell, 'The Paston Women on Marriage in Fifteenth Century England', *Viator*, vol. 4 (1973), p. 469.

<sup>43</sup> Mary A. Welch, (ed.) *Willoughby Letters of the First Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Nottingham Miscellany, no. 4: Thornton Record Series: vol. 24, 1967), p. 20 – 21 (c. 1533).

<sup>44</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c.dl 474 f. 74 (Dec 9 [1582?]).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 17 (25 July 1623). For a detailed analysis of the life of Robert and Brilliana Harley see Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 17 (25 July 1623).



For younger children, parents were still keen to make sure that they were happy with the proposed arrangements. Arthur Throckmorton halted a proposed match between his daughter and the son of Bassingbourne Gawdy in 1582 due to her ‘unmeetness’ in age and growth.<sup>47</sup> He later told Gawdy that he should put off coming to finalise the match until the young people had met ‘as she is unwilling to take anybody’.<sup>48</sup> Here, he allowed his daughter a good deal of agency in giving her opinion on the match, although by his efforts to postpone it, he may have been keen to use her choice as an excuse to delay it further. Conversely, children could also use their obligations of parental obedience as an excuse. Margaret Willoughby who reportedly gave her father all the letters that her prospective groom wrote to her, wrote to her cousin she would in no circumstance make a promise without her father’s consent, but actually did not like her suitor anyway.<sup>49</sup> Her father also seems to have allowed her the agency to distance herself from a proposal after she wrote to him begging for it not to go ahead.<sup>50</sup> When Bess of Hardwick was arranging a marriage for her thirteen-year-old daughter Frances with the son of George Pierrepont, he corresponded with her to let her know that, ‘the gentillwoman your doughtour lyke our boye vppon sight aswell as I & my wife lyke the yonge gentillwomman’, again, taking into account the wishes of the young bride-to-be.<sup>51</sup> A letter to William Cecil from Catherine, duchess of Suffolk, from 1550 shows the extent to which some parents considered the weighty duty of marrying their young children. Catherine wrote an extended account of her feelings about a proposed match for her young son, aged fifteen at the time, to the daughter of the Earl of Somerset.<sup>52</sup> She considered it a great unkindness to force a child into the ‘miserable estate’ of a marriage they had not chosen with ‘their own likings’, allowing that both her son and the Earl’s daughter should be allowed to decide if they were in agreement to the marriage. She thought it best that ‘my son and his daughter shall much better like it to make up the matter themselves and let them even alone with it’ as no good agreement between them could displease her and, ‘if it should not happen well, there is neither they nor none of us shall blame another.’ She evidently had a great deal of consideration for the young people concerned and was willing to allow them a significant amount of choice in this

---

<sup>47</sup> HMC Gawdy p. 19 – 20, (22 October [1582]).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 20 (22 Feb 1582/3).

<sup>49</sup> HMC Middleton, pp. 593 – 94.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 596.

<sup>51</sup> ID 054, Sir George Pierrepont to Bess of Hardwick, 4 November 1561, in *Bess of Hardwick’s Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=054>

<sup>52</sup> Everett Wood (ed.), *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, pp. 245 – 48 (1550).

important decision to ensure a successful match. Fathers could also see the importance of affection and love in marriage. Robert Herrick began a letter to his brother with the news that his daughter was to be married on 10 November 1590, noting that it would be exactly twenty-three years since his own marriage.<sup>53</sup> His proud link with his own anniversary shows that the marriage of his daughter meant something to him beyond being a useful financial transaction. It suggests that he and his wife acknowledged their own anniversary and were pleased at the notion their daughter would share it with them. This evidence challenges the traditional idea of the early modern marriage arrangement being impersonal and exclusively concerned with financial benefits.<sup>54</sup> Personal affections had always been part of a successful marriage, albeit to varying degrees.

### **Marriage as a crisis point**

The above marriages show that, on many occasions, the arrangement of a child's first marriage could be a fairly uncomplicated experience for a family. However, the importance of this point of the individual life cycle, and the consequences of it for the extended family in terms of alliances and opportunities, often caused tension. Caroline Bowden notes that age at marriage has implications for the study of marriage negotiations as older children would be more likely to refuse a match suggested to them.<sup>55</sup> They were also more likely to marry clandestinely without parental consent. Most first marriages in landowning or noble families took place in the late teens or early twenties which coincided with an age where young people had reached the end of their education and were beginning to see themselves as adults. Conduct literature from the sixteenth century often stated that children should have some input in the choosing of their marriage partner and that parents should not force them to marry someone they disliked. However, many also were of the opinion that marriage could only be valid with parental consent, which was not the case in English law. Perkins's manual stated that 'private contracts, that are made without free and lawfull consent of parents, are not only unprofitable and unlawfull, but even by the law of God mere nullities.'<sup>56</sup> This confusion between the doctrine of

---

<sup>53</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 475 f. 4 (26 October 1590).

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England: The Patriarchal Stage', in *The Family in History*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 13 – 57 argued that the 'companionate marriage' emerged in the early modern period when marriages became more affectionate and less subject to external influence.

<sup>55</sup> Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries...', p. 97.

<sup>56</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 76.

parental obedience and the understanding by children that they were entitled to some say in who they were to marry meant that problems could arise during the arrangements. This concern was particularly aimed at young women. Bartholomew Batt stated that parents could disown a daughter if she did anything to put her parents' marriage plans for her in danger, and William Cecil advised, 'Marry thy daughters in time, lest they marry themselves.'<sup>57</sup> These concerns were often founded in real experiences of families where young women sometimes decided to make their own marriages, against the wishes of their parents.

Adolescence appears to have been a difficult time for parent-child relationships in the family, and difficulties surrounding marriage arrangements were the tipping points causing a wider family crisis. Finding a suitable match for John Paston I's sister, Elizabeth, proved a difficult task which took up much of his mother, Agnes's time. Several matches were proposed from Elizabeth's late teens onwards. The most notable was the match was proposed between Elizabeth and Stephen Scrope, a man around thirty years her senior. While Agnes and other family members were in favour of this match, Elizabeth was not and attempted to oppose the wishes of her family, leading to reports that Agnes had severely beaten her and refused to allow her out of her room.<sup>58</sup> It is unclear what state Agnes and Elizabeth's relationship was in prior to this crisis point, but Agnes certainly took the job of finding a marriage alliance for her daughter very seriously and was not willing to concede to Elizabeth's wishes, treating her as a child at a point when Elizabeth was displaying independent, adult behaviour. This example has been used frequently for what it tells us about medieval motherhood, often drawing the conclusion that medieval mother-and-daughter relations were generally troubled, with the primary concern of parents being to marry their daughters off, even if against their own will, and being happy to use physical punishment if necessary.<sup>59</sup> It is unclear whether this was an isolated incident or common in the expectations and discipline of children, although it is the singular, most extreme example of its kind, suggesting its irregularity.

---

<sup>57</sup> Batt, *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 27, *Practical Wisdom*, p. 42.

<sup>58</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 2, pp. 31 – 3 (29 June not after 1449).

<sup>59</sup> For example Anne Crawford suggests in *Letters of Medieval Women* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002) p. 42, that 'some of the Paston women seem barely to have tolerated the presence of their daughters in the house.' However, Keith Dockray presents a more balanced view of the family's marriage strategies, arguing that personal, non-materialistic considerations figure more prominently in the family than is often allowed; Keith Dockray, 'Why did Fifteenth-Century English Gentry Marry?: The Pastons, Plumpton and Stonors Reconsidered', in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Michael Jones (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), p. 70.

In 1469 the Paston family found itself in a crisis point for a second time over Agnes' granddaughter, Margery's marriage. Margery's relationship with her mother, Margaret, was already strained in her teens, as shown by Margaret asking her son John to find a place for Margery in another household as they were 'wery' of each other.<sup>60</sup> This relationship worsened when, at around the age of twenty, Margery secretly married family bailiff Richard Calle. The match was deemed unsuitable by the entire Paston family and their acquaintances. Margery's father, John I, had died a few years before her marriage, so her eldest brother, John II, was by then nominal head of the family. After finding out about the marriage, Margery's mother, Margaret, wrote her son several long letters setting out her disapproval of his sister's actions and her hopes that the family could arrange an annulment. She even included the opinion of the local bishop that the marriage was a disaster for the family and universally disapproved of.<sup>61</sup> In one of these letters she made her feelings very clear using the word 'brethele', meaning a wretch, to describe her daughter:

I pray 3ow and requere 3ow þat 3e take yt not pensyly, fore I wot wele yt gothe ryth nere 3owr hart, and so doth yt to myn and to othere; but remembyre 3ow, and so do I, þat we haue lost of her but a brethele, and setyt þe les to hart; fore and sche had be good, wat so euere sche had be yt xuld not a ben os jt tys, fore and he were ded at thys owyre sche xuld neure be at myn hart as sche was.<sup>62</sup>

The extent of the family crisis is evident in the writing of this letter, in the hand of Margaret's younger son Edmond. Although his secretary hand is neat, the script becomes larger and rounder towards the end of the letter and does not leave space for a formal signature. It is not addressed which adds to the sense that messengers would have been going backwards and forwards with updates about the situation and John could have been receiving regular letters. As a family matter it is appropriate that it was written by another sibling and John would presumably have heard his mother's dictated words through his brother's handwriting. Mother and daughter's already tense relationship had been stretched to breaking point and Margery's public defiance of her family was the final straw. However, Margery's

---

<sup>60</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 338 – 39 (3 April 1469).

<sup>61</sup> Walter Lyhert was Bishop of Norwich at this time. As a supporter of the Lancastrians, he had no position at court during the reign of Edward IV so gave his entire attention to his diocese, where he was apparently very conscientious. He became friends with the Paston family during this time. R. J. Schoeck, 'Lyhert, Walter (d. 1472)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17247>, accessed 5 June 2015].

<sup>62</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 341 – 44 (10/11 September 1469).

marriage met the medieval church's model of marriage, which stated that as long as the couple consented, the marriage was valid. While the Church disapproved of clandestine marriages such as this one, they did not breach its rules.<sup>63</sup> Even after the Reformation when the authority of the father in the household was promoted by Protestant culture, rules on parental consent and marriage were not changed. In 1585, John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford, after the clandestine marriage of his son, Lord Beauchamp. Whitgift, although agreeing that he was sorry to hear of Beauchamp's disobedience, urged Seymour to show forgiveness and reconcile with his son as there was no scriptural basis for the union to be dissolved. He quoted at length from the teachings of St. Ambrose to support his line of reasoning.<sup>64</sup> These theological arguments which legitimised clandestine marriages as long as both parties had consented were upheld throughout the early modern period, despite opposition from families who wished to have more control over their children's choices.<sup>65</sup>

It seems likely that Margery Paston would have known the disapproval her clandestine marriage would cause as she had watched her mother and grandmother attempt to match her and other female family members from her childhood, although, as identified by Diana Watt, it can be difficult to find the voices of these younger Paston women.<sup>66</sup> There are few letters from Margery in this period, or her aunt Elizabeth around twenty years earlier. Margery is portrayed by her mother as a headstrong and stubborn young woman but, in her letters from her husband she appears much more vulnerable as he tried to support her in standing by their decision.<sup>67</sup> Richard Calle did not seem to have foreseen the problem that the marriage would cause. He subsequently tried to obtain the support of Margery's brothers John II and John III, although he never received it.<sup>68</sup> The marriage was not

---

<sup>63</sup> Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), p. 163; A. J. Finch, 'Parental Authority and the problem of Clandestine Marriage in the Later Middle Ages', *Law and History Review*, vol. 8 (1990), p. 189.

<sup>64</sup> BL Add. MS 32092 f. 52 (4 Nov 1585).

<sup>65</sup> Edward Seymour himself had married secretly in 1560, to heir to the throne Katherine Grey. Thus his marriage caused a political scandal and angered the Queen. His son, Lord Beauchamp had been born while the couple were imprisoned in the Tower. Despite this, he still reacted angrily to his son's secret marriage, personally intervening to keep the couple apart; Susan Doran, 'Seymour, Edward, first earl of Hertford (1539?–1621)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25161>, accessed 19 June 2015].

<sup>66</sup> Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, p. 144.

<sup>67</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 2, pp. 498 – 500 (3 July 1469).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

annulled and the couple remained married until Margery's death in around 1482. This suggests that the image of Margery as a determined woman with the courage to defy her family is somewhat true, but her vulnerability is surely indicative of the anger and hurt she had caused in her family. The Pastons had used marriage as a way to increase social standing for several generations and children were expected to continue this rise in status. As we have seen, the whole family was often involved in the arrangement of these matches with parents, grandparents and siblings among others all using their own networks. John II and III were following the family 'rules' that their sisters were required to marry suitable men who would increase their social and economic status and provide a new patronage network for the family. So it was in their interest to work and agree with their mother to find suitable partners for them. A few years later the family encountered a similar situation with Anne Paston, Margery's younger sister. There are two references in the correspondence from 1473 when Anne would have been around seventeen years old, mentioning a possible affair or romance with a family servant, John Pampyng. John Paston II asked his brother to ensure that their 'olde love' was not renewed as another, more suitable match was being contracted for her.<sup>69</sup> With no letters surviving from or to Anne it is uncertain what factors ended her relationship with Pampyng. It is possible that after the treatment of her sister and her marriage to a family servant, Anne saw the problems which could arise in marrying against the wishes of one's family. However, the situation does show another example of a young Paston woman attempting to assert her own authority over the issue of her future and letting emotions about love and marriage rather than pragmatic thoughts of family advancement take priority, albeit unsuccessfully in this case.

In the early seventeenth century, Sir Percival Willoughby and his wife, Bridget, found themselves in a similar situation where they struggled to cope with the wilfulness of their adolescent daughter. His wife wrote to him that her behaviour was concerning her, largely due to her insistence on marrying the son of a Mr Cavendish.<sup>70</sup> Days later she wrote again with the warning of their daughter's 'grete forwardnes' in receiving her proposed groom in her chamber and that Percival 'neede make som hast downe, to know what shall be assured, otherwise they will be married'.<sup>71</sup> Bridget appears to have decided that letting the marriage go ahead would cause the least problems for them all, whether she and her husband consented to it or not. Their

---

<sup>69</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 473 – 74 (25 November 1473).

<sup>70</sup> HMC Middleton p. 180 – 81 (8 February c. 1615).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 181 (11 February c.1615).

daughter was explicitly rebelling against her parents' control and Bridget thought, 'it is a good riddance a sutch a gentlewoman, who saithe your harde speeches to her hathe mad her mor hast then otherwise she woulde have done.'<sup>72</sup> Disobedience and poor choice in marriage seem to have been enough reason for mothers to disown their daughters and use harsh language about them to show their displeasure. Percivall's brother Edward had secretly married relation Winifred Willoughby in 1590, against the wishes of her parents. Winifred's mother Elizabeth was reported as flying into 'violent passions' at the very thought of the match and subsequently locked her daughter up so she could not send or receive any letters to or from him.<sup>73</sup> Winifred and Edward did manage to secretly marry and this removed her from the 'cruelty and unnaturall usage' her mother had forced her to endure, the main reason given by Edward for making the extraordinary decision to take this course of action.<sup>74</sup> Descendent of the family Cassandra Willoughby who collated the family papers into this history described that following this marriage:

There are in the library at Wollaton many very melancholy letters from Winifrid Willoughby to her father acknowledging her great offence and beging he would forgive her. In one, dated January, 1595[-6], writ in very moving termes both to Sir Francis and his lady, beging if ever child was heard of father and mother, they would not now stop their ears to her, who came to them with a wounded heart.<sup>75</sup>

Winifred attempted to appeal to her father's obligation to care for her as his child, in spite of the fact that she had reneged on her obligations by disobeying him. However, it seems that her father refused to see the couple or provide them with any financial assistance, and the couple remained in a state of poverty for the rest of their lives.<sup>76</sup> For Winifred's parents, as with the parents of Margery Paston, this betrayal by a daughter over a marriage was irreconcilable.

As shown at the opening of this chapter, the Thynne family of Longleat also faced a crisis in the late sixteenth century over a secret marriage, in this case of their young son, Thomas, to Maria Touchet, daughter of Baron Audley, a local member of Parliament who also held diplomatic positions in Ireland and the Low Countries and later became an Irish peer.<sup>77</sup> Both Thomas's mother, Joan, and later his wife, Maria,

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 181 (11 February c.1615).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 599.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 600.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 601.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 601.

<sup>77</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*; Wall, 'For love, money or politics?'; Wall, 'The Feud and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: a reconsideration', *Sydney Studies in English*, vol. 5 (1979), pp. 84 – 95.

married into the Thynne family at, or following, points of crisis surrounding marriage. Although Joan's match to John Thynne had been straightforward, it had followed a failed match which was, and continued to be, a source of tension for both families. Initially, Sir John Thynne began arrangements to marry his son and heir, also John, to Lucy Marvin, the daughter of Sir James Marvin in 1574. Arrangements were almost concluded but fell apart after a disagreement over the bride's dowry, and consequently Marvin and Thynne entered into a bitter feud which continued between the families until the end of the century.<sup>78</sup> John the younger was reluctant to drop the marriage negotiations with Lucy Marvin but accepted his father's demands when threatened with disinheritance. He wrote to Lucy's mother in 1575 to apologise but stated that he could not support himself or her daughter without his inheritance.<sup>79</sup> Later that year, arrangements began to marry John to Joan Hayward, daughter of Sir Rowland Hayward. As noted above, these arrangements proved much more straightforward and the couple were married in 1576.

In 1594, John and Joan's eldest son Thomas, whom Joan confessed to love 'too well above the rest' and 'more than myself' secretly married Maria Touchet, daughter of Lucy Marvin, now Lady Audley, of the Marvin family, whose feud with the Thynnes had been caused in part by her failed marriage negotiations with John Thynne.<sup>80</sup> Alison Wall has done a significant amount of work editing and analysing this case study but it is used in this chapter to show how the family crisis caused by this clandestine marriage was not only caused by Thomas challenging his parents' authority, but also by a conflict between the two sets of parents, particularly the mothers, over their responsibilities to ensure good marriages for their children. It also has many parallels with the experience of the Paston family over 100 years earlier. In this case John and Joan Thynne engaged in a battle with Lucy Audley to assert and confirm their authority over their son. John Gillis notes that 'the 1590s were a time when vows in defiance of parental and parish authority were becoming so numerous as to provoke much public comment' arguing that by the end of the sixteenth century, self-betrothal was used by couples as a way of defying patriarchal power in society.<sup>81</sup> However, although conduct literature shows us that parental consent for marriage was considered important, and a concern of Protestant reformers who criticised the Catholic Church for giving too little weight to family

---

<sup>78</sup> Long. TH/VOL/I f. 162 (1574).

<sup>79</sup> Long. TH/VOL/I f. 158 (March 1575).

<sup>80</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, pp. 10 – 11 (8 May 1595).

<sup>81</sup> John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 46.



interest and allowing parental authority to be undercut, it was never enshrined in law.<sup>82</sup> This is evidence in support of the argument that Protestant reformers had increased the role of patriarchal power in families which some couples reacted to, however, as shown by Margery Paston and Richard Calle in the fifteenth century, a clandestine marriage in defiance of one's parents had other factors contributing towards it, apart from a change in society's values. Although the 'desire to safeguard parental influence' seems to have intensified over the sixteenth century and some attempts were made to reflect the weight of family interest in marriage, neither the Calle or Thynne marriages could have been annulled on the grounds of parental disapproval.<sup>83</sup> It is possible that John and Joan Thynne may have believed this to be the case and tried to have the marriage annulled on the basis that their teenage children had not sought their consent, but ultimately the case rested on whether the young couple had consented to the match.<sup>84</sup> The reaction of Margery's late medieval Catholic parents and Thomas's Protestant ones shows a shared concern from aristocratic parents about maintaining authority over their children's important life decisions and the impact this would have on their wider family aspirations.

Similarly to Margery Paston, Thomas Thynne used his own strong convictions to ensure his marriage was not annulled by his parents. On finding out about his marriage, Joan was initially convinced that her son had been a victim of 'deceits that hath been used to deceive a silly child' asked her cousin Higgins to go to Thomas at university and act as an intermediary while she mediated Higgins's letters to her husband, John.<sup>85</sup> In these letters, Joan even referred to John's previous betrothal to Lucy Marvin, drawing parallels between her husband and son:

so I pray you to accept of his true repentances which I hope you will receive him into your favour again, and to have that fatherly care which heretofore you have had of him, although he hath justly deserved your displeasure. Yet consider of him by yourself when time was.<sup>86</sup>

She also assured her husband that Thomas was repentant and would agree to be ruled by them in future.<sup>87</sup> Higgins also seemed convinced of Thomas's shame, and also of the suggestion that he had been persuaded by the Marvins and not knowingly

---

<sup>82</sup> Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 156; Jeffrey R. Watt, 'The Impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation', p. 129.

<sup>83</sup> Martin Ingram, 'Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c. 1350 – c. 1640', in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London: Europa Publications Ltd, 1981), p. 46; Gowing, *Domestic Dangers*, p. 156.

<sup>84</sup> Wall, 'For love, money or politics?', p. 520.

<sup>85</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, p. 8 (15 April [1595]).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11 – 12 (30 May 1595).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9 (20 April 1595).

consented to the marriage. Throughout this time, Thomas does not appear to have written directly to his parents. This seems surprising as other letters from children exist which are deeply penitent and apologetic in response to disobedient actions. The explanation for this seems to be that Thomas was not at all repentant and believed that he had consented knowingly to the match. Much was made of Thomas's youth and immaturity as the cause of his persuasion on the part of the Marvins, but Thomas increasingly asserted his own conviction that the marriage was indeed valid, and consensual. His father, in the midst of the court case, described him as 'my proud undutiful son' and Joan described Thomas as dealing 'monstrous unnatural and unkindly with me' although stating that she would not be found a monster to him.<sup>88</sup>

Although initially Joan acted as a mediator for her son, and seems to have continued to act tolerantly in the face of his disobedience, when Thomas went definitively against his parents' wishes and the marriage was declared valid in 1601, her anger was directed at Maria and her mother.<sup>89</sup> Maria attempted to contact Joan to reconcile the situation, but Joan ignored many of the letters her new daughter-in-law sent to her. As shown at the start of this chapter, she blamed Maria's mother for influencing the young couple who, due to their age, were not able to judge the situation correctly.<sup>90</sup> Lucy and Maria refused to accept any accusations of wrongdoing and in particular, strong words from Maria in letters to her mother-in-law suggest someone who was willing to make her own choices and assert authority over her own life and family. Graham Williams's work on the correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne details different techniques used by the women to conduct their troubled relationship.<sup>91</sup> Maria began by using deferential and respectful language, in one letter notably including a lock of her own hair in the seal as a gesture of humility and appeasement to her mother-in-law.<sup>92</sup> As Joan refused to be placated by her efforts, Maria moved from attempts at reconciliation to anger and resentment at the treatment of her and her husband by his mother, utilising rhetoric of sarcasm, subverting the politeness usually found in correspondence from a daughter to

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 20 (26 July [1601]); p. 57 – 58 (28 March 1602).

<sup>89</sup> Wall, 'For love, money or politics?', p. 528.

<sup>90</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, p. 28 (8 August 1602).

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Women's Epistolary Utterance*.

<sup>92</sup> James Daybell, 'Material Meanings and the Social Signs of Manuscript Letters in Early Modern England', *Literature Compass*, vol. 6 (2009), p. 661.

mother-in-law.<sup>93</sup> She wrote to Joan several years after the marriage stating her opinion quite plainly:

You talk too much of malice and revenge. Your will to show malice may be as great as please you, but your power to revenge is a bugbear that one that knows his own strength no better than Mr Thynne doth, will never be afraid of.<sup>94</sup>

By this time Maria was in her mid-twenties, the wife of an important landowner as Thomas had inherited his father's estates and titles in 1604, and the mother of his heirs. She had also inherited her mother-in-law's title, a source of tension between mothers and daughters-in-law that Nicola Clark has identified in the 1530s for members of the Howard family, but also occupied a higher social status from birth and as a wife after Thomas was knighted.<sup>95</sup> During this time, her growth into adulthood and a life in which she had her own authority and responsibility seemed to have led her to stop seeking reconciliation and showing deference to her mother-in-law. The confusion inherent in social hierarchies complicated their relationship but Joan's behaviour seems to have led Maria to assert herself against her widowed mother-in-law in the position as daughter of an aristocrat and wife of another, over the subservient position she had felt obliged to occupy as a daughter-in-law when Joan was the highest status woman in the Thynne family.<sup>96</sup> We have seen that anger was an emotion which served a purpose in early modern society to highlight unacceptable conduct and dereliction of duty and the letters between these two women can be read as objects which conveyed the negative emotions which remained between the two throughout Thomas and Maria's marriage.<sup>97</sup> It is possible that the two women never met, they certainly did not live in the same house, so these letters were the only vehicle they had to negotiate their troubled relationship.<sup>98</sup>

Lucy Marvin was understood, particularly by the Thynnes, as having a great deal of influence over her daughter and thus responsible for arranging the secret marriage. A contemporary of Lucy's, Elizabeth Manners, countess of Rutland, was also seen as a woman capable of influencing her young daughter over her marriage. In her early twenties, her daughter Bridget was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth and played a useful role to her mother as a contact at court. Bridget went some way to

---

<sup>93</sup> Williams, *Women's Epistolary Utterance*, pp. 189 – 218.

<sup>94</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, pp. 33 – 35 (1605).

<sup>95</sup> Clark, 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family...', p. 68.

<sup>96</sup> Alison Wall, 'Deference and Defiance in Women's Letters of the Thynne Family: the Rhetoric of Relationships', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. Daybell, p. 83.

<sup>97</sup> Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships...', p. 567.

<sup>98</sup> Williams, *Women's Epistolary Utterance*, p. 205.

appeasing the Queen on her behalf so that she need not be present at the court herself.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Bridget Manners was seen by the Queen as being entirely obedient to her mother and still very much in the status of child. Elizabeth took Bridget away from the court in 1594 and she was married in secret without the Queen's permission. Letters from Bridget's friends at court to her mother report that Bridget was in favour of the match. She apparently said that she would live a happier life with her proposed husband than the greatest Lord at court and the writer, cousin Mary Harding, stated if Elizabeth 'could bring it [the marriage] to passe, my lady woulde thinke herselfe very happye.'<sup>100</sup> Despite evidence that Bridget was part of arranging the match, and certainly consented to it, the Queen was furious and blamed the situation entirely on Elizabeth. The Queen was reported as saying that Bridget's obedience to her mother meant she 'would not have adventured so great a breache of duetye, as to have don this her last and greatest acte without your honours acquaintance and consent first.'<sup>101</sup> Bridget was certainly adult enough to maintain her mother's interests at court and had family networks of her own there, but clearly was still expected to be, and be seen as obedient to her mother, as a child should be. Maria Thynne was also sent away from court by the Queen after news of her marriage came out; however, a report by Rowland Whyte to Robert Sidney of the news did not allow blame to be placed anywhere else. He wrote that 'Mistress Touchet hath caught Mr. Thynne's son and heir, and married herself unto him, to his father's mislike, for with her shall he have nothing but those virtuous qualities she brought from court.'<sup>102</sup> The active part he gave her in this short statement does not allow for Maria's youth and inexperience. If anything, his sarcastic comment about her 'virtuous qualities' portrays her as very much in control of the situation, in a way that Thomas was not.

As in the case of Bridget Manners, Thomas Thynne's actions were attributed by other friends and family to his 'inexperienced youth'. Although, as we have seen, young men could take a lead role in their own marriage negotiations, Thomas Thynne was clearly deemed too young and immature to be able to make this important decision without his parents, and they were furious when he maintained his violation of obedience towards them by insisting his marriage was consensual. In his case, where he became estranged from both parents, friends suggested advice that 'I beseech you let no means pass that may mitigate the form of his

---

<sup>99</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 318, (November 1593).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 321 (5 July 1594).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 322 (20 Aug 1594).

<sup>102</sup> Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, pp. 85 – 86 (16 November 1595).

father's indignation [...] remembering the meekness that St Paul requireth in a father towards his child, though of erst disobedience.'<sup>103</sup> This guidance, based on religious texts, suggests a pattern stemming from the Prodigal Son parable where parents are encouraged to forgive their children's actions, and softens other religious advice that children should always obey their parents.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps in reality it was recognised that children were unlikely to always follow their parents' instructions and so forgiveness was sometimes required. It is interesting that the friends believed John should act with 'meekness' towards his child and signifies that those outside the Thynne family might have had a different opinion of the marriage between feuding families. Both families were well known at the time and Shakespeare's patron Lord Hunsdon was connected with them and the legal cases surrounding the feud, including the marriage of Thomas and Maria. It has been suggested that the prominence of this family crisis prompted Shakespeare to write *Romeo and Juliet* in the years following as propaganda for the Elizabethan regime to show the negative consequences of family feuds.<sup>105</sup>

It is apparent from these examples that marriage could be a point of crisis for the family where different individual wishes could cause tensions which involved the wider family. Even though these examples occur over a large time period, shared characteristics are evident, demonstrating the importance of the balance of authority in the parent-child relationship over a child's first marriage, something which remained crucial throughout the early modern period and into the eighteenth century. The culture of credit meant that parents worried about the impact an unsuitable marriage match would have on the family's reputation, and their reputation as parents. For the Thynnes, who had been embroiled in a local feud with the Marvins for decades, the lack of control they had over their son's behaviour could have damaged their local standing. Although the actions of the young people are similar, it is the difference in actions of the parents which makes the cases slightly different. In many ways these examples illustrate a conflict between mothers acting on behalf of the interests of their respective families, as much as a conflict between parents acting on family interests and children rebelling against them. Although fathers were involved in these situations, they seem to have taken a back seat. Not much correspondence survives to show that they were actively involved although from the letters described above, we know that they usually shared the opinions of

---

<sup>103</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, p. 56 – 57 (6 May 1596).

<sup>104</sup> Luke 15: 11 – 32.

<sup>105</sup> Wall, 'The Feud and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*', pp. 84 – 95.

their wives and felt the same dissatisfaction about the circumstances. This may stem from the closer relationships between mother and child that are evident in all these cases. Elizabeth, Margery and Anne Paston, Thomas Thynne, and Maria Audley all appear to have had closer relationships with their mothers than fathers and this might be the cause of the trend for mothers to take a more active role in rectifying family tensions. Joan's inability to control the marriage of her favourite son probably would have caused enough of a negative reaction to the match, without taking into account other issues such as the family feud. Haskell argues, with particular reference to the Paston family, that in the late medieval period, daughters were largely problematic to the family and needed to be found good marriages as soon as possible in order to remove their burden on the household. This seems an extreme conclusion to draw since much of the surviving evidence about medieval mother-and-daughter relationships comes from these points of crisis where there were obvious tensions between family members. Although there appears to have been a trend in the Paston family that daughters began to rebel against their families' plans for them, this did not always mean that the relationships they had with their mothers were essentially unhealthy and lacking affection. The nature of using letters as sources means that we do not get the full picture of family relationships, only fragments from periods of family separation or crisis, although we can use other sources to complement letters and fill in some gaps. As is demonstrated in the following section, parents and children often remained close in their adult lives, after their children had married, even if their relationships had become fraught at the transitional stage of a child marrying and officially entering adult life.

## **Married life**

Literature from the late medieval and early modern period rarely deals directly with the parenting of adult children, but correspondence shows that parental obligation did not end after this occasion. Elizabeth Foyster's article on the parent-child relationship after marriage opens with a critique of historians who portray marriage as 'the point of no return when the break from parental control was completed'.<sup>106</sup> She uses court records to explore the continued presence of parents in the lives of their adult children showing the diverse aspects of life, either mundane or ordinary,

---

<sup>106</sup> Foyster, 'Parenting Was for Life, Not Just for Childhood', p. 314.

and crisis points where parents interacted with married children. This final section further considers this stage in the life cycle. It argues that although children demonstrated independence, they continued to use the support network of their parents, even once they were married and had created their own family.

Contemporary writers were aware of the difficulties faced by parents as their children grew up. *The Office of Christian Parents* (1616) has a lengthy section discussing the parent-child relationship after a child's marriage. The author acknowledged that parents 'can never cast off the feeling care, watchfull eie, and lovinge desire, which they have naturally engraven in them towards their children.'<sup>107</sup> However, they instructed that although the duty and interest parents had for their children was perpetual and appropriate, parents had to show respect to married children, especially in their own houses.<sup>108</sup> This warning that parental authority was not absolute shows us how difficult this transition could be, especially for parents who did have this natural and enduring care to counsel and discipline their children, but were required to reassess their behaviour in light of the maturity and position of their children. Ben-Amos refers to a 'delicate balance of power' reached by most adult men and women with their parents by the time they married, where they were no longer expected to obey their parents' orders.<sup>109</sup> However, this balance was often still being negotiated well into a child's adulthood, and in times of need, children frequently fell back on the support their parents were obliged to give them. This relationship was rarely a linear progression where children gradually increased their own independence and authority away from their parents. In times of need, they might rely on the financial or emotional support of their parents. Emotional support was an area where parents and children could find solace and comfort in each other and this reciprocity could be a rewarding and beneficial aspect of the development of this relationship into adulthood.

Negotiations of authority between parents and newly-married children was not uncommon. For aristocratic and gentry couples, the newlyweds would most likely have lived with one set of parents after their wedding. In 1587, Francis Willoughby apologised to the parents-in-law of his daughter that the newly married couple could not live with him due to refurbishment of his house, showing that this arrangement would have been expected.<sup>110</sup> For eldest sons, they might have lived in their father's

---

<sup>107</sup> *The Office of Christian parents* (1616), p. 208.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>109</sup> Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, p. 234.

<sup>110</sup> HMC Middleton p. 566.

house until his death when they inherited it. Not being under their own roof could cause problems for children who wanted to be acknowledged as adults in their new status as part of a married couple. This was an issue for John Thynne when he married his wife Joan in 1576. The couple had no home of their own initially because the house bestowed on them was the subject of legal disputes, so they lived separately with their in-laws.<sup>111</sup> Joan lived with her new father-in-law and his wife, with whom she did not get on, and John lived with his father-in-law in London, in a no more harmonious relationship.<sup>112</sup> John particularly found himself, married and at the age of around twenty-seven, still facing discipline and criticism from his father and father-in-law. His father criticised the clothes John wore and largely supported his father-in-law in attempting to assert some control over him. Alison Wall suggests that these problems were caused by the young John Thynne's refusal to accept the control of his father-in-law, though the situation could equally be viewed as his parents not reneging control of him.<sup>113</sup> But despite evidence that children were not expected to blindly follow their parents' discipline in adulthood, this does not seem to have been the case with John Thynne. His new wife wrote to him begging him to accept the authority of her father, albeit only to make their lives easier. One letter is particularly revealing as she acknowledged her father's anger was not borne solely from John's behaviour:

the first time I found him much moved with anger as it seemed to me. But afterward I found his anger was not so much as it was to the outward show, as he said, to make you humble yourself and know your duty towards him, as it is the part of a natural son to do to his father as I need not reveal it unto you, for you know it very well.<sup>114</sup>

The 'outward show' was apparently crucial to John's relationship with his father-in-law. In this case, there was no indication that John might be allowed to assert his own authority in the family. In fact, the main point of contention was that he was trying to do this. Joan was also aware that John knew exactly how he was supposed to behave as an obedient child, albeit an adult one, and pleaded with him to apologise and publicly announce his failings in a letter; at this stage of their lives they were too dependent on their parents to assert their own authority against them. Joan's later anger with her daughter-in-law's parents after her son Thomas's

---

<sup>111</sup> Wall, *Two Elizabethan Women*, p. xx.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 3 (1576).



clandestine marriage was exacerbated by the knowledge that Thomas lived under his father-in-law's roof and had accepted their authority over him.

Children continued to show outward obedience in their correspondence with parents. Letter addresses and formulas were social conventions which were expected and almost never ignored.<sup>115</sup> Although children may have relished the independence and authority they gained as married adult men and women, as well as it being expected, it was also sensible to remain outwardly obedient to parents who could be an important source of support throughout life. As parents were heavily involved in the first marriages of the majority of their children, so were they involved when these marriages broke down or encountered problems. Bess of Hardwick's son Charles married Margaret Kitson in around 1581, a match which his mother was involved in negotiating.<sup>116</sup> Margaret had died by July 1582 and Bess took on her son's cause of making sure he inherited the lands he had been promised by her parents, regardless of the short duration of the union. She petitioned Sir Thomas Cornwallis, the father-in-law of Margaret's father, hoping he would influence Kitson to deal with Charles 'as his owne child', emphasising the mutual love that had existed between Charles and Margaret and so the natural fit he would be as heir to Kitson.<sup>117</sup> Her petitioning and negotiating on behalf of her son continued into 1594 when she wrote to Margaret's mother Elizabeth to make sure Charles was granted the lands he was due.<sup>118</sup> In this letter she invoked the covenants made by her and her eldest son William when negotiating the match, which Elizabeth was now bound to. She also referred to 'my soone Charles & my daughter Margaret' further enhancing their connection. By 1594 Charles was forty years old, so by no means a child, but happy for his mother to invoke her status as his wealthy and well-connected parent to benefit his cause.

---

<sup>115</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, p. 53.

<sup>116</sup> ID 227, Bess of Hardwick to Gilbert Talbot, Master Clarke and William Cavendish, earl of Devonshire, 31 January 1580/1, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=227> ; ID 105, Bess of Hardwick to Lord Thomas Paget, 10 June 1582, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=105>

<sup>117</sup> ID 175, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Thomas Cornwallis, 15 July 1582, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=175>

<sup>118</sup> ID 236, Bess of Hardwick to Lady Elizabeth Kitson, 8 April 1594, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=236>

Parents also supported children during marital strife and separation. Mary, wife of Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, went to live with her father George, fourth earl of Shrewsbury after her marriage broke down. He offered her a home and tried to persuade her husband to provide an adequate income.<sup>119</sup> During a time of marital difficulty with her husband Anthony, Elizabeth Bourne received a letter from her mother assuring her that there were many at court acting as her friends and encouraged her to come to court where her stepfather would solicit her cause. She also added that Anthony had written them a 'very villainous letter' with 'the bowysting of a druonken man, or the raving of a madd man.' This display of support, both in insulting her son-in-law and offering to assist her daughter's cause must have been significant for Elizabeth during this time.<sup>120</sup> Robert Sidney arranged a marriage for his eldest daughter Mary to Sir Robert Wroth in 1604 and took an interest in their relationship immediately afterwards. Only a month after Mary's marriage, Robert reported to his wife Barbara that he had met his son-in-law in London:

I find by him that there was somewhat that doth discontent him: but the particulars I could not get out from him: only that he protests that he cannot take any exceptions to his wife nor her carriage towards him. It were very soon for an unkindnesses to begin: and therefore whatsoever the matters be, I pray you let all things be carried in the best manner till we all so meet. For mine enemies would be very glad for such an occasion to make themselves merry at me.<sup>121</sup>

This quote is an illuminating one about concerns relating to behaviour within families and how it could affect social standing and credit. As creditworthiness was related to households, not just the individual, Robert Sidney's concerns about his reputation being affected by his children's behaviour would have been understood by his wife and other contemporaries as being of wider importance to his general reputation and standing in society. Family credit was also important to women who relied on their family reputations as much as men, and could affect this reputation with their own actions.<sup>122</sup> The fact that Robert was still concerned with his daughter's life and social interactions after her marriage suggests that a child was still seen as strongly connected, if not still part of the same household, as her parents. If there was such a clear-cut definition that once a daughter married, she became part of a new household, separated from her natal family, then her parents would have no need to

---

<sup>119</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 177.

<sup>120</sup> BL Add. MS 23212 f. 195 (c. 1580).

<sup>121</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, p. 123 (10 October 1604).

<sup>122</sup> Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Women, Credit, and Family Relationships in England, 1300 – 1620', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2005), pp. 145 – 46.

worry about her future behaviour reflecting on them. Parents needed to remain involved in their children's lives after they had entered adulthood because they were still seen as connected and even responsible for their children after this point. The behaviour of a child could certainly affect a family's creditworthiness if they brought into question the morality of the household. A dysfunctional marriage or separated couple could damage a family's reputation for reliability by going against accepted cultural norms of how families were expected to conduct themselves.<sup>123</sup>

As well as responsibility for crisis points in their children's adult lives, parents were often a source of everyday support. In times of financial need, it was not at all uncommon for children to first turn to their parents. In c. 1550 Thomas Kitson wrote to his mother Margaret to ask for £40 towards necessities. He stated that he would pay her back as soon as he could and intended to be 'a good husband' and provide for his family by himself after this expense.<sup>124</sup> Bassingbourne Gawdy, who had run up debts for his father to pay off in his youth continued to ask him for money after he was married. In an undated letter from after his marriage (as he mentions his wife and children), he asked his father to pay some debts for him as he was worried about discrediting himself to a 'Sir Bacon'.<sup>125</sup> Here, Bassingbourne's credit and social standing was reliant on parental support, demonstrating another way in which the reputation of individuals could be influenced by their wider family. George Manners wrote to his father to let him know that he and his family had arrived safely at their new home, but 'we have no provision for our needs'.<sup>126</sup> He then asked for his father's 'advice and furtherance' which must have been a polite request for financial assistance. We know that George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, was involved in his son Gilbert's financial affairs, evidenced by the rift that divided them in the 1580s, but his correspondence shows that he also gave money to his married daughter who was resident at court around that time.<sup>127</sup> Bess of Hardwick also mentions giving money to her son William in one letter although it is possible her comment 'I prey you delyuer thys money to wyll Cauendysse with all spede' could refer to money she owed him.<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*, pp. 149 – 50.

<sup>124</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/26 (c. 1550?).

<sup>125</sup> BL Add. MS 36989, f. 351 (c. 1580s). With a likely date in the 1580s, 'Sir Bacon' could be Francis Bacon who was working at Gray's Inn during this period, as was Bassingbourne.

<sup>126</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 360 (15 May 1600).

<sup>127</sup> HMC Bath, pp. 34 – 5 (19 May 1581).

<sup>128</sup> ID 193, Bess of Hardwick to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury and Thomas Baldwin, 28 December 1578, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=193>

As a woman with relative financial independence Bess was as able as her husband to finance her children. In the early seventeenth century, Lettice, wife of Framlingham Gawdy, wrote to her father Robert Knollis to ask for various favours including sending clothes for her and her two young sons.<sup>129</sup> This was partly due to his location in London where he could obtain better quality goods than she could in Norwich, however she also asked for news of his business exploits and expressed a wish for him to visit her as he had done previously.<sup>130</sup> Robert Sidney continued to feel responsible for his daughter's financial status after her marriage. In one letter he implored his wife to give Mary money that he would repay as, 'I should be very loath that she did want.'<sup>131</sup> At this time, Mary had been married for almost a year, but her father still felt responsible for providing for her, and there is no mention of her husband or obvious reason why he could not support his new wife. After his daughter Grace's marriage in 1590, John Manners, youngest brother of the second earl of Rutland, wrote to her father-in-law, Sir John Fortescue, to confirm that he had sent the full payment of her marriage portion. However, in the same letter he also asked Fortescue to bestow £100 of the money to 'his son' (his son-in-law) to clear him of debt. He appealed to Fortescue as a 'natural kind parent' and although the use of the term 'son' for son-in-law is not unusual in this period it still suggests a demonstration of a familial bond that Manners wanted to express. However, it seems safe to assume that his parental concern was really for his daughter. He wanted to make sure that by clearing his debts, his son-in-law could go on to 'be a good husband and live in an orderly way' therefore ensuring a financially stable life for her. So even after she was married, Grace's father was the appropriate person to step in to try and arrange the couple's financial situation, with the agreement of the groom's father.<sup>132</sup> Grace Manners exact age is not known, but at the time of their marriage in 1590 her husband Francis was around the age of twenty-seven, so they were not a particularly young married couple. This shows a combination of financial responsibility, and care for his daughter's wellbeing on the part of John Manners, which extended well into the couple's adult years. Parents also commonly gifted essential household items to their children, including expensive items such as

---

<sup>129</sup> BL Add. MS 27395, f. 127 (no date).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, pp. 124 – 25 (25 August 1605).

<sup>132</sup> HMC Rutland p. 284 (16 November 1590).

beds.<sup>133</sup> This kind of financial support was pragmatic but also symbolic as individuals sought to preserve their memory through generations of their family.<sup>134</sup>

Aside from material support, parents could also play a significant role in their children's family life as a source of support and care. Even when separated from their children as most aristocratic and gentry parents were, they could provide advice and express their support through correspondence. It is in adulthood where we see how important these letters could be, as opposed to the often more formal and less personal letters sent by adolescent children as part of their education. Daybell argues that more equality can be seen in letters between fathers and daughters after their marriages and the letters of Eleanor Manners and her father are an example of this. Daughter of William Paston IV, Eleanor married the Earl of Rutland in 1525 and her increased status may have led her to a more equal relationship with her father. Their letters are warm in tone and read like a conversation between two adults who value each other's opinions. Although her letters were written in a deferential format and tone to acknowledge her respect for her father, she asked to be kept informed of news and passed on news of her own to him.<sup>135</sup> He continued to offer her advice and expressed a desire to see her, in one letter apologising for being delayed on his visit to her.<sup>136</sup> It is common in parents' letters to their adult children to express a desire to see them. In this respect, many letter-writers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries appear less bound by formulaic conventions. Letters between parents and children, including fathers and daughters, can show extremely affectionate and close relationships, for example, Charles Framlingham's letter to his ill daughter Anne Gawdy in 1594. He stated that he would 'gladly do anything for her a father can do' including sending a servant who could play music for her to pass the time and to contact his wife to hurry to her to see if she could help.<sup>137</sup> Bess of Hardwick also expressed an urgent desire in a letter to her eldest daughter, 'Let me heare this nighte how you and your good Lorde doth else shall I not slepe quiatly.'<sup>138</sup> Robert Sidney regularly informed his wife about his plans to visit his adult children. His relationship with Mary appeared to be independent to the unfortunately undocumented relationship between her and her mother, Barbara, and he often

---

<sup>133</sup> Laura Gowing, 'The Twinkling of a Bedstaff: Recovering the Social Life of English Beds 1500–1700', *Home Cultures*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2014), pp. 275 – 304.

<sup>134</sup> Catherine Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy*, pp. 69 – 71.

<sup>135</sup> BL Add. MS 27447, f 74, 75, 76 (c. 1525 – 1544).

<sup>136</sup> HMC Rutland p. 31 (21 September 1543).

<sup>137</sup> HMC Gawdy, p. 45 (26 April 1594).

<sup>138</sup> ID 181, Bess of Hardwick to Mary Talbot, [1580s], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=181>

seems to have seen his daughter without Barbara being present. In one letter he told Barbara that 'I will make haste to see you, but first I will see my daughter Wroth, with whom I have not been yet since the progress,' opting to see Mary before returning home to his wife.<sup>139</sup> By their nature as documents which connected people separated from one another, letters show us how parents dealt with the separation from their adult children and these examples demonstrate their desire to see them and concerns for them.

The most common form of care and support mentioned in letters between parents and married children, particularly daughters, is in reference to pregnancy and childbirth. Fathers often expressed joy and relief at the safe delivery and the health of their pregnant daughters. George Manners happily informed his father of his sister's pregnancy reporting that she 'never looked better, she is verye bigge and looketh for a happy howre wich God send her.'<sup>140</sup> On the news of his daughter's safe delivery, Sir Edward Conway wrote to his son-in-law Robert Harley, 'joye is excedeing great in my Brill's safe delivery'.<sup>141</sup> He was so pleased with the news of his grandson's health and at being asked to be a godparent that he made a point of writing in his own hand to express this. It was a mark of respect to his daughter and an indication of how important he thought the letter was that he did not allow a secretary to write it.<sup>142</sup> In a reversal of roles from their childhood when many of Robert Sidney's letters contained concern and enquiries about the children he was separated from by an overseas post, it appears that, as adults, they frequently had business or visited London where he then worked, so he began to inform their mother of their wellbeing. During one stay in London he passed on a letter from newly married daughter Katherine to his wife and informed her of Katherine's health, writing, 'your daughter Maunsell who is not with child and still ill of ague so as God willing, I mean to have her up afore winter.'<sup>143</sup> His concluding remark implies that Katherine was with neither of them so must have corresponded with her father primarily to pass on news. This short comment also shows that Robert was interested and kept informed of his daughter's health and possible pregnancies. A few years earlier, Katherine had miscarried and Robert reported the news to his wife, also sending a servant to Katherine's house to check on her health.<sup>144</sup> As with his daughters, after his son Robert had married, Robert Sidney appeared as informed

---

<sup>139</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, p. 126 (7 October 1606).

<sup>140</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 286 (21 December 1590).

<sup>141</sup> HMC Portland, p. 19 (27 October 1624).

<sup>142</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England*, pp. 85 – 87.

<sup>143</sup> Hannay et al, *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, pp. 166 – 67 (24 August 1611).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135 (8 August 1608).

and concerned about the health and possible pregnancies of his new daughter-in-law, referring to her light-heartedly as 'the great belly' in one letter.<sup>145</sup> One of Lettice Gawdy's letters to her father includes a humorous comment about her many pregnancies when requesting new clothes. Although she had been sent clothes by her mother, she wrote, 'I have had so many children that they have worn through all my things and therefore I must try my friends again for I trust that you have some old shirts in a corner for me or some old things'.<sup>146</sup> She sealed this letter with coloured silk, a symbol of love and friendship, indicating her efforts to add a personal touch to the correspondence. These letters containing humour and genuine joy on the part of fathers shows that pregnancy and birth were not solely a matter for women to concern themselves. Indeed in some cases fathers took on a primary care role, for example Margaret Donington, countess of Bath, was living with her father when she gave birth in 1558. He reported news of the birth to Margaret's mother-in-law and stated that he would be keeping her at home with him where she could get the best care.<sup>147</sup> As has been shown throughout this research, gender was not always the only way in which parenting tasks were divided. Fathers often displayed a great deal of interest in the health of their daughters.

Nonetheless, mothers also frequently commented on their daughters' pregnancies and their letters perhaps offered more practical advice and help, usually based on their own experiences. The correspondence of Margaret and Anne Clifford is an excellent example of a supportive mother-and-daughter relationship, carried out largely through correspondence.<sup>148</sup> The pair discussed all the issues Anne faced in her married life, including prolonged legal wrangling over her inheritance, which will be discussed in the following chapter. During this stressful time, their correspondence about Anne's young daughter Margaret, presumably named for her grandmother, clearly provided a welcome respite for the women. Margaret often referred to her little granddaughter in letters, usually as 'sweet bab' or 'sweet baby' and once as 'sweet daughter'.<sup>149</sup> Their surviving letters also contain evidence that shows the strength of the mother-daughter bond, in spite of the period of conflict they went through. Margaret gave advice to Anne about weaning her daughter that she should wait eighteen months, 'for so was it with you and on of your brothers'.<sup>150</sup>

---

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 202 (21 July 1617).

<sup>146</sup> Add MS 27395 f. 125 (no date).

<sup>147</sup> CUL Hengrave 88/1/115 (24 June 1558).

<sup>148</sup> Daybell, 'Social Negotiations in Correspondence', p. 15.

<sup>149</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 f. 13, 15, 16, 18; (1615 – 1617). At this time, the term 'granddaughter' was not in common use so these terms are not unusual.

<sup>150</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 f. 11 (9 April 1615).

In the correspondence of the Middleton family there are 'very kind letters' to Bridget Willoughby from her mother in the 1590s when she was heavily pregnant. Elizabeth Willoughby sent Bridget wine and encouraged her to ask for whatever she needed.<sup>151</sup> Margaret Donington sent her daughter Bridget a cradle when she was expecting her first child, demonstrating the sharing of goods between generations.<sup>152</sup> These examples show that parents were a crucial source of support for daughters during pregnancy, both offering useful material goods, and also practical and emotional support. This was also an important time for parents and many letters show the obvious concern they had for their adult children, and the joy expressed when all went well during a potentially dangerous time. Parents and children shared feelings of concern and affection for each other particularly as they aged. Ben-Amos argues that by the time children reached their mid- to late-twenties, their relationship with their parents 'had been transformed'.<sup>153</sup> The examples presented here support this conclusion to the extent that a change in tone is evident between parents and adult, married children. Although still using deferential language and terms, children appear to have developed a more equal and reciprocal style of correspondence, reflective of their own more equal status with their parents. Children supported their parents, acting as a comfort and beginning to reply with equal amounts of affection and care. However, it is also clear that they continued to rely on their parents for financial, material, and emotional support. It was in the interest of parents to continue to provide this support as financial difficulties or poor decision-making could damage the family's wider reputation in society.

### **Old age and grandparenting**

Renegotiation of domestic authority between parents and children continued throughout the life cycle, into its final stages. Parents who lived into old age and saw their children grow up often found the dynamics of the relationship altered as children became a source of support and emotional comfort. Although, if they were able, parents could take on significant parental responsibilities for their grandchildren, acting as surrogate parental figures for them. Sociologists have been interested in the ageing process since the 1980s and more recently there has been an increase

---

<sup>151</sup> HMC Middleton p. 570. These comments were written by descendent of the family and compiler of a report on the archives in the eighteenth century, Cassandra Willoughby. The original letters which she describes no longer survive.

<sup>152</sup> CUL Hengrave 88/1/35 (no date).

<sup>153</sup> Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, p. 234.



in work considering the experience of old age throughout history.<sup>154</sup> Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane note in their collection of essays on women and ageing that old age can be described in terms of chronological age, cultural age and functional age.<sup>155</sup> Old age was usually defined in the sixteenth century as beginning at age sixty, but looking at chronological old age does not tell us much about how the elderly experienced life.<sup>156</sup> Cultural old age affected the way society viewed the elderly, mainly by using visual markers to define old.<sup>157</sup> Henry Cuff's *The difference of the ages of mans life*, although only splitting life into four parts: childhood, youth, manhood and old age, explained that old age was made up of two stages. He wrote that between the ages of fifty and sixty-five heat and moisture declined, leading to impaired strength, but that decrepit old age came after this as the conclusion of life 'when our strength and heat is so farre decaied, that not onely all abilitie is taken away, but euen all willingnesse [...] resembling death it selfe, whose harbinger and fore-runner it is.'<sup>158</sup> This distinction was commonly understood in contemporary medical texts and 'ages of man' schemes. Whether men and women were considered old was based on cultural perceptions of how they looked, but also on their ability to function in society. A man or woman could look physically old but still be able to work and hold positions in their community, or in government in the case of the aristocracy. Queen Elizabeth, although only five years his junior, began to refer to George Talbot as 'old' when he was approaching sixty, seeking to end the conflict between him and his wife because his years required repose of the mind.<sup>159</sup> George suffered from ill health, mainly gout, throughout his life and died aged sixty-two, so may have seemed older than he was. She described him in this way in more

---

<sup>154</sup> Diane K. Harris and William E Cole, *Sociology of Ageing* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1980); Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Joel T. Rosenthal, *Old Age in late medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), Christian Krötzel and Katariina Mustakallio (eds.), *On old age: approaching death in antiquity and the Middle Age*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

<sup>155</sup> Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>156</sup> Sears, *The Ages of Man*; Burrow, *The Ages of Man*; Youngs, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe*; Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life*, all consider late medieval interpretations of stages of life including old age, what defined them and how they were expressed in popular culture.

<sup>157</sup> Botelho's essay in this collection looks at the impact of the menopause and argues that women and men did not enter into or experience old age in the same fashion. In the menopause, women had a marked and visible entry into old age where men approached it more gradually; 'Old age and menopause in rural women of early modern Suffolk' in *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*, eds. Botelho and Thane, p. 43 – 65.

<sup>158</sup> Henry Cuff, *The difference of the ages of mans life together with the original causes, progress, and end thereof* (London, 1607, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), pp. 117 – 20.

<sup>159</sup> HMC Bath, p. 70 (12 May 1586); p. 94 – 95 (1588).

than one letter so perhaps it was a joke between them, but the above reference is part of a letter discussing the serious matter of his marital separation which suggests an element of truth about, and possibly concern for, his health. An elderly person's 'function' only ceased when they became ill or decrepit and so needed looking after by family or the state.<sup>160</sup> This functional old age had the greatest effect on the treatment of individuals and their experience of life. Individuals usually described themselves as old when ill health began to affect them more significantly, for example John Herrick and his wife who were unable to travel to London for their son's wedding partly because of their age and lack of easy mobility.<sup>161</sup> This functional old age was reflected in the changing authority in the parent-child relationship. Although parents aged and were past the prime of life that their adult children were in, if they were in good health and of sound mental capacity then they continued to be active as parents and family members. However, there are examples of parents who required more support from their children in old age.

Conduct literature did sometimes reference the duty of the child to their elderly parent. William Vaughan's manual *The Golden Grove* (1608) looks at the duties of parents to their children and vice versa and his final point on the duties of the child is that 'children must helpe their parents in their old age and supply their wants with all necessary complements.'<sup>162</sup> Another Puritan writer, John Dod stated that neglecting a parent in their old age was 'the fowlest dishonour that can be'.<sup>163</sup> Neither of these texts gendered this care, although Perkins's *Christian Oeconomie* stated that daughters were responsible for the care of elderly parents.<sup>164</sup> The Jesuit poet, Robert Southwell's posthumously published pamphlet *The Dutifull Advice of a Loving Sonne to his Aged Father* appears to concern itself with the issue of children and elderly parents, but mainly focuses on how the elderly should prepare

---

<sup>160</sup> Claire S. Schen, 'Strategies of poor aged women and widows in sixteenth-century London', in *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*, eds. Botelho and Thane, pp. 13 – 30, considers how poor women sustained themselves in the transitional period before and after the Reformation when provision for poor in the community also saw reform.

<sup>161</sup> Bodl. MS Eng hist c. 474, f. 74 (9 December [1582?]).

<sup>162</sup> W. Vaughan, *The Golden Grove, moralised in three Bookes. A worke very necessary for all such as would know how to governe themselves, their houses, or their country* (London: 1608, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Vaughan was a Puritan writer from the gentry class who promoted the cause of the yeomanry and later in life attempted to set up a colony in Newfoundland as a means of 'of alleviating social and economic problems of the kind that he had described in *The Golden-Grove*'; Ceri Davies, 'Vaughan, Sir William (c.1575–1641)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28151>, accessed 5 June 2015].

<sup>163</sup> Dod, *The bright star which leadeth* (1603), p. 6.

<sup>164</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 148.

themselves for death.<sup>165</sup> He reversed the conventions of the parental advice genre by offering stern advice to his own father on his spiritual preparation for death, albeit in a humble tone, presenting it 'with all humility'.<sup>166</sup> Although it is interesting that he chose to frame his ideas in this way, the context of his promotion of the Catholic faith in spite of persecution does not mean that children were habitually charged with the duty of spiritually preparing their parents to face God.

Evidence shows that children were more likely to provide practical and emotional support to elderly parents to improve their experience of life. Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester, appears to have become increasingly reliant on his eldest son in his later years, particularly after the death of his first wife. He wrote long letters to his son Robert in the period c.1621 – 26 concerning his wellbeing and health.<sup>167</sup> His tone was similar to that of children writing to parents in their adolescence as he thanked his son for writing to him and expressed his enjoyment of their correspondence. The young Robert followed his father's career path and was employed on diplomatic assignments for James I. When he was to be sent on a trip to the Low Countries, the elder Robert wrote to ambassador, Dudley Carleton, asking that he would not be sent away. He wrote that, 'he is my only son and since his mother's death my chiefest comfort'.<sup>168</sup> This letter shows us that, particularly after the death of his wife, Robert became more reliant on his children for support. The dynamics in the relationship had shifted and in some ways, as adults, his son took on a more responsible role providing his father with emotional support. Robert remarried a few months before his death and biographer Millicent Hay suggests that his marriage to Sarah Smythe in 1626 'must have come out of his yearning for companionship'.<sup>169</sup> Sarah had also been widowed and it seems likely that husband and wife would have supported each other because Robert's children could not fully take responsibility for him in adulthood as they now ran their own households, careers, and families. Although only approaching age forty, George Talbot explicitly stated in a letter to his second wife Bess of Hardwick, that she was a comfort to him

---

<sup>165</sup> St. Robert Southwell, *The Dutifull Advice of a Loving Sonne to his Aged Father* (1636); Southwell was executed in 1595 for his missionary activities and involvement with Catholic plotters against Elizabeth I. He was canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11 – 12.

<sup>167</sup> Arthur Collins (ed.), *Letters and Memorials of State*, vol. 1 (London: 1746), pp. 351 – 55.

<sup>168</sup> TNA SP 84/107/187 – 8 (1622).

<sup>169</sup> Millicent V. Hay, *The Life of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester (1563 – 1626)* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1984), p. 228.

in his old years.<sup>170</sup> After his death, Bess was encouraged by her friend Lord Burghley to seek comfort in her children. Although she regularly corresponded with a wide network of family and friends, he worried that she was choosing to live a solitary life at the family seat in Chatsworth, Derbyshire, and believed her children could be a source of support for her.<sup>171</sup> Rowland Whyte's father sought out the companionship of his son in his last days, shown by Rowland asking employer Robert Sidney for leave to visit him as 'he hath a desire to see me ere he die'.<sup>172</sup> Rowland's busy life at court had not allowed him to care for his father in his long sickness but his presence was requested for his final days. Children could be a vital source of support for their parents in their old age, particularly caring for them as they were less able to conduct their own affairs, or became ill.

The diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, although primarily kept as a record of her religious observations, also provides an account of the daily life of an early modern noblewoman.<sup>173</sup> She had no children but her diary makes many mentions of her own mother. She recorded on an almost daily basis that she visited, walked with, or wrote to her mother. There are some references to her mother staying the night at her house but the frequency with which she visited her indicates that she lived reasonably close by. They visited friends together, read together, and kept each other company when ill. This indicates a day-to-day level of support, probably reciprocal, where both women enjoyed their relationship and each other's company. This type of mother-daughter relationship is also evident in the Sidney family where Mary Sidney Wroth often stayed with her mother in their family house after she was married and had a child of her own.<sup>174</sup> However, Margaret Hoby also appeared to take a lead role in arranging her mother's financial affairs. She mentioned the sale of her mother's house several times in the years 1600 – 01. The two women discussed the matter and once she was resident in a new house it was Margaret who took orders for the altering of her mother's house and finishing work and furnishing. As an only child, responsibility fell to Margaret to look after her mother's financial affairs in later life, something she appears to have done without much difficulty or comment. She noted these activities in her diary along with other

---

<sup>170</sup> ID 071, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Bess of Hardwick, [1574?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=071>

<sup>171</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 317 (9 August 1593).

<sup>172</sup> Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, pp. 432 – 3 (26 February 1599/1600).

<sup>173</sup> Moody (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan Lady*.

<sup>174</sup> Robert Sidney often addressed both his wife and daughter in letters home when they were both living there; Hannay et al., *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, p. 172 – 73 (10 August 1611).

everyday tasks so they cannot have been considered unusual. As parents aged, their children did take on a more dominant role providing support for them both emotionally and in financial and business matters. This, if not a reversal of the parent and child roles, was at least a move towards a more reciprocal arrangement where children began to care for their parents in the way they had previously cared for them. Age was an important factor in deciding who asserted and held authority and regardless of the categories of 'parent' and 'child' having a hierarchical structure of their own. This could be altered when the child was the one with the functional and cultural status as a mature adult 'in our prime and most flourishing estate'.<sup>175</sup>

But for parents who were physically well in their old age, another aspect of parenting that endured even after one's children were adults was the responsibility to help them by looking after and bringing up grandchildren. Parents in who lived long enough to see their grandchildren could take on an important role in their lives, promoting their interests and providing advice in a parental capacity. In chapter one, we saw that other family members could act as surrogate parents for children and this was certainly the case for grandparents.<sup>176</sup> Little historical work has been done that focuses on grandparents in the medieval and early modern periods. Joel T. Rosenthal's three essays on the subject remain the only dedicated studies of grandparents in the late medieval period.<sup>177</sup> The role of the grandmother in the early modern family has been commented on in women's history research but there is no dedicated study of grandparents of both genders for this period beyond a few pages in Ralph Houlbrooke's wider study of family life, although he does point towards several important aspects of the relationship.<sup>178</sup> Perhaps this is because life expectancy in the long sixteenth century meant that there were comparatively few real relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. However, a study of parenting throughout the life course must acknowledge the continued role that

---

<sup>175</sup> Cuff, *The difference of the ages of mans life...*, pp. 117 – 20.

<sup>176</sup> In *The Office of Christian parents* (1616), p. 2, grandparents are the first on the list of others who could act as parents.

<sup>177</sup> Joel T. Rosenthal, 'Three-Generation Families: Searching for Grandpa and Grandma in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York: Garland Publishing Ltd, 1996), pp. 225 – 38; 'Looking for Grandmother: The Pastons and their counterparts in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. Carmi Parsons and Wheeler, pp. 259 – 78; 'When Did you Last See your Grandfather?', in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Rowena E. Archer (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), pp 223 – 44.

<sup>178</sup> Barbara Harris's otherwise comprehensive book, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450 – 1550* only makes two passing mentions of grandmothers; Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries...', p. 156-9 mentions that grandmothers could play an important role in the upbringing of their grandchildren; Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, pp. 192 – 93.

parents played in their old age as they applied parenting skills to the children of their children. As its oldest members, they were often capable of asserting their authority as the patriarchs or matriarchs of their family, but also developed warm and affectionate relationships with their grandchildren.

Grandparents also had a crucial family role in the fifteenth century. Margaret Paston remembered all her grandchildren in her will, including illegitimate grandchildren and the children of her estranged daughter Margery.<sup>179</sup> Although this is not proof of an affectionate relationship it would be unusual for a woman to leave money to grandchildren that she did not know or see. Katherine Howard (aunt of Queen Catherine Howard, fifth wife of Henry VIII) also left money to an illegitimate granddaughter in her will of c. 1554. As illegitimate daughters were unlikely to receive any dowry or maintenance from their father's kin, both women must have felt some sort of grandmotherly duty to remember these girls in their wills.<sup>180</sup> Agnes Paston's grandsons wrote to her out of a sense of duty to her as the matriarch of the family. John Paston II was plainly told by his mother, 'Your grandam wold fayne her sum tydyngys from yow. It were welle do þat ye sent a letter to hyr howe ye do as astely as ye may.'<sup>181</sup> Agnes had the authority that if she asked for a letter from her grandson then it was expected this request should be met as quickly as possible. This seems to have been a regular request as in another letter John III asked his elder brother to pass on news to Agnes, 'for I promysyd for to send them tydyngs'.<sup>182</sup> In the early seventeenth century, Bess of Hardwick's grandchildren also wrote her letters out of a sense of filial duty. Her granddaughter Alethia Howard wrote her a letter on unusual, ornately decorated paper where she apologised for 'deferring so long the presenting [of] my duty', but making assurances of her sincere affection.<sup>183</sup> And in a letter concerning the birth of Bess's great-grandchild, her grandson-in-law Thomas Howard, earl of Arundel, wrote apologising profusely that although Bess had wanted to be godmother, the Queen had also expressed a wish to be, and they

---

<sup>179</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 382 – 89 (4 February probably 1482).

<sup>180</sup> Katherine Howard's motives for caring for her illegitimate granddaughter as 'a wise financial precaution' are argued by Nicola Clark's in her analysis of the lives of the early sixteenth century Howard women; 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family...', p. 80.

<sup>181</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 287 – 88 (15 November 1463).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 523 – 24 (11 December 1462).

<sup>183</sup> ID 237, Alethia Howard to Bess of Hardwick, [1606-8], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=237>

could not disobey her.<sup>184</sup> Like Agnes Paston, Bess of Hardwick commanded a certain amount of authority among her grandchildren who did not want to offend her.

It was common for grandparents to be congratulated on their grandchildren for example in 1594 Gilbert Talbot, seventh earl of Shrewsbury, wrote to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, after visiting his household where he met Burghley's two daughters and four grandchildren and hoped his prayers, 'kepe you longe to live, to continew your moste honorable and naturall care towardses them. A finer chylde have I not sene then Sir Robert Cecills sonne.'<sup>185</sup> Several years later, Rowland Whyte wrote to Gilbert expressing his hope that Gilbert would be made a grandfather soon by his newly married daughter Mary.<sup>186</sup> As shown above, Margaret Clifford sent letters expressing her affection for her granddaughter and advice to her daughter Anne on how to care for her.<sup>187</sup> Mary Sidney Wroth lived with her mother in the early years of her marriage and of her widowhood when she had her infant son James. Her father, Robert, held the wardship of the young James Wroth but his letters show that he also cared personally for the child. In letters to his wife, Barbara, he asked after the infant's health and passed on news of him back to Barbara when Mary and James were in London with him.<sup>188</sup> On another occasion he reported the health of a new-born granddaughter back to his wife that she was, 'a very pretty one'.<sup>189</sup> Joan Thynne took care of her infant grandson after the death of his mother, as did Honor Lisle, and Bess of Hardwick certainly had a close relationship with her grandson George. Her husband referred to him as 'my only loy george your boy' and 'Your Ladyship's pretty fellow'.<sup>190</sup> This suggestion of ownership does not appear unfounded. A letter from George's parents to Bess informed her:

George is very well [...] he drynkethe every day to Lady grandmother, rydethe to her often [...] and if he have any spyse, I tell him, Lady

---

<sup>184</sup> ID 004, Thomas Howard to Bess of Hardwick, 25 May [1607], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=004>

<sup>185</sup> HMC Bath, p. 124 (7 May 1594).

<sup>186</sup> Brennan et al., *The Letters of Rowland Whyte*, p. 571 (November 1607).

<sup>187</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 ff. 11, 13, 15, 16, 18; (1615 – 1617).

<sup>188</sup> Hannay et al., *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*, p. 188 (28 June 1615), p. 195 (27 September 1615).

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211 – 12 (18 September 1617).

<sup>190</sup> ID 245, George Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [1575-7], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=245>; ID 218, George Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, June 19 [c.1575], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>

grandmother is comme and will see him, which he then will ether quyckly hyde or quyckly eate, and then askes where Lady Danmode is.<sup>191</sup>

Bess was obviously well-known by her grandson and played a disciplinary role as strict grandmother who would not tolerate any bad behaviour, although she evidently had an affectionate relationship with him as well. When George died as a baby in 1577 she was reported by her husband as 'not so well able to rule her passions' and suffering with 'contynuall wepyng'.<sup>192</sup> This level of grief was clearly seen as problematic, so much so that he asked leave from court to go to her, but as the baby's grandson he also acknowledged his grief for his only grandson. The joy that they had found as grandparents is shown in the level of their distress, even though they both accepted God's will to take him.

Houlbrooke argues that old people had fewer obligations and so a more relaxed attitude to the upbringing of children.<sup>193</sup> Grandparents could dote on their grandchildren to the point of spoiling them, for example Brilliana Harley's father who would 'not yeald that any should be loved like' his young grandson Ned.<sup>194</sup> Jacqueline Eales argues that Ned was a source of great joy to his ageing grandfather, at a time when relations with older family members who had been forced to relinquish their control of estates was not always harmonious.<sup>195</sup> Concerns about inheritance and lineage did not always lead to discord in this relationship. Charles Framlingham was a doting grandfather to the son of his daughter Ann, writing to her with concerns for his health and wellbeing.<sup>196</sup> The boy had been named Framlingham for him and was to be made his heir, as Charles had no sons.<sup>197</sup> Charles, and both of Framlingham's parents, died before he reached adulthood and there are papers preserved in the Gawdy archives outlining the details of his grandfather's will, which were important for many years afterwards as Framlingham became a ward of the state.<sup>198</sup> Thus grandchildren could be an important vehicle for the continuation of family estates and lineage, as well as loved members of the

---

<sup>191</sup> ID 085, Gilbert and Mary Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 1 August 1577, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=218>

<sup>192</sup> SP 53/10 f. 90 (17 August 1577).

<sup>193</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 192.

<sup>194</sup> HMC Portland, p. 21 (21 April 1626).

<sup>195</sup> Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads*, p. 25.

<sup>196</sup> HMC Gawdy, p. 38 (24 November 1593).

<sup>197</sup> Robert and Brilliana Harley had planned to name their son after his maternal grandfather, Sir Edward Conway, but were persuaded by Conway to give him the name of his paternal grandfather, presumably to highlight the connection to that side of the family where he would be his grandfather's heir, HMC Portland, p. 19 (27 October 1624).

<sup>198</sup> HMC Gawdy, pp. 106 – 07 (c. 1606), 107 (c. 1610).



family and so grandparents were aware of their continued obligations to them and to the wider success of the family.

Grandparents could be a source of emotional and financial support for their adolescent and adult grandchildren, as they were for their own children. Grandmothers sometimes played an active role in parenting their grandchildren and took on additional roles, such as healthcare and other parental activities like marriage arrangement and advice giving. In the fifteenth century, the mother of Elizabeth Stonor was criticised for not visiting her grandchild, Anne, during a period of illness, indicating that this would usually have been expected.<sup>199</sup> Her contemporary, Agnes Paston took a principal role in trying to arrange a marriage match for her granddaughter, Margery, which was reported to her father, John I, including Agnes's thoughts on the financial aspects of the match.<sup>200</sup> Descendent of Agnes, William Paston IV supported his grandson financially while he was being educated in London.<sup>201</sup> Grandparents could take on adolescent grandchildren full-time by taking them on in service as seen in chapter one when Bridget Manners step-grandmother the Countess of Bedford took Bridget into her household and recommended her for a placement at court. The household of Agnes Howard, Duchess of Norfolk and step-grandmother of Queen Catherine Howard, became infamous in the 1550s as the site of the Queen's sexual indiscretions while in service there, prior to her marriage to the King. Her leniency with the adolescents in her care, many of whom were relations, had a direct influence on the reputation and later downfall of her granddaughter, although the Countess herself escaped execution due to her old age.<sup>202</sup> Grandfathers might also take on responsibility for their grandson's university education as John Manners did in the early seventeenth century.<sup>203</sup> Grandparents continued to play a vital role towards the end of the period considered by this thesis, showing the importance of wider family and kin into the seventeenth century. *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague* was commissioned by the family of Magdalen after her death, with the English translation dedicated to her step-grandson.<sup>204</sup> She is portrayed as a woman who acted as an advice-giver and moral example for all of her family including her grandchildren. There is an anecdote towards the end of her life; when she was ill, she was

---

<sup>199</sup> Carpenter (ed.), *Stonor Letters and Papers*, pp. 319 – 321 (1478).

<sup>200</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 286 – 87 (probably 1463).

<sup>201</sup> Add MS 27447 f. 86 (c.1550).

<sup>202</sup> Clark, 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family...', p. 88 – 89.

<sup>203</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 407 (August 1607).

<sup>204</sup> Smith, *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague 1538 – 1608* (1627), p. 1.

persuaded to eat meat during lent which she had never done before, but made sure everyone knew she was not doing it of her own will. She commanded her 'little grandchildren to be out of the way' in case they saw.<sup>205</sup> Although the book itself served the purpose of promoting the memory of a pious and influential Catholic woman, it is evidence of a family where a grandmother was seen as an important influence on grandchildren.

An episode from the later life of Bess of Hardwick shows the extent to which grandparents could take on responsibility for grandchildren beyond everyday concerns. As a descendent of Henry VII through his daughter Margaret Tudor, Queen of Scotland, Bess's granddaughter Arbella Stuart was in line to the thrones of England and Scotland during the latter part of Elizabeth I's reign. Her father died when she was an infant and her mother, Bess's daughter Elizabeth, died when she was seven years old. Bess was granted Arbella's wardship and so, the responsibility for her granddaughter and her affairs.<sup>206</sup> Although Bess might have willingly taken control over her potentially powerful and wealthy grandchild, it cannot be ignored that the death of her daughter had an impact on Bess. In her old age, and as a grandmother, she was required to take on parental responsibility for Arbella and care for her as a daughter, for the good of Arbella herself, and for the wider family. Firstly, she used her own networks to petition the Queen to restore the portion of Arbella's inheritance which Elizabeth had taken for herself. She wrote to William Cecil and Francis Walsingham asking them both to speak to the Queen on her behalf, stating that she needed money to provide Arbella with the servants and teachers she required 'for her better education and trayninge vpp in all good vertue and Learninge, and so she maye the soner be redye to attende on her Majestie.'<sup>207</sup> In the years following, Bess also found herself responsible for Arbella's security. As Elizabeth I aged, Arbella's place in the line of succession meant that she was watched by many. Cecil informed Bess that there had been rumoured plans to abduct her and her

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp. 37 – 38.

<sup>206</sup> It was not out of the question that a grandparent would be granted the custody or wardship of their grandchild. An early example in the Plumptre correspondence c. 1503, details how the son in law of Robert Plumptre was at risk of losing his inheritance due to his grandmother's poor maintenance and 'unkindly' treatment towards him; Joan Kirby (ed.), *The Plumptre Letters and Papers*, pp. 164 – 165 (c. 1503).

<sup>207</sup> ID 144, Bess of Hardwick to Francis Walsingham, 28 January 1581/2, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=144>; ID 162, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, 28 January 1581/2, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=162>

granddaughter and Bess reassured him that she was adequately protecting Arbella and had dismissed one of her servants who had begun to act suspiciously.<sup>208</sup>

As was usual for parents, Bess also played a role in the arrangement of any marriage matches for Arbella. In 1602 – 3, the Earl of Hertford planned to marry his grandson to Arbella, something that Bess and her political network did not support.<sup>209</sup> It was around this time that Bess and Arbella's relationship began to break down. Bess wrote directly to the Queen asking that Arbella be placed elsewhere and bestowed in marriage as she could no longer look after her.<sup>210</sup> Arbella invented a fictional lover and attempted to escape from her grandmother's care much to the disapproval of the Queen.<sup>211</sup> Bess wrote Elizabeth a candid letter where she explained:

the bad perswasions of some, have so estraunged hir minde and naturall affection from me, that she holdes me the greatest enemie she hath, and hath given hir self over to be ruled and advised by others so that the bonde of nature being broken, I can not have any assuraunce of hir good cariage.<sup>212</sup>

After the death of her daughter, Bess had taken on the care of her granddaughter, which involved a great deal of time and organisation. She was perhaps hoping for increased political influence by having custody of a possible heir to the throne, but the above quote also gives an indication of the relationship she expected to have with her granddaughter. That the 'naturall affection' and 'bonde of nature' had been damaged meant Bess could not take on a parental role in Arbella's life. In this episode, Bess had experienced a changing parent-child relationship with her granddaughter affected by a family crisis point. The death of her mother and expectations of her marriage combined to inspire the adolescent Arbella to declare independence from the parental figure in her life. Here, the death of a child had an impact on Bess's adult life as she negotiated a relationship with her granddaughter. In old age, parents could require more from their children in terms of emotional and

---

<sup>208</sup> ID 163, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, 21 September 1592, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=163>

<sup>209</sup> ID 136, Robert Cecil and John Stanhope to Bess of Hardwick, [January] 1602/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=136>

<sup>210</sup> ID 128, Bess of Hardwick to Elizabeth I, 9 January 1602/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=128>

<sup>211</sup> ID 141, Arbella Stuart to Bess of Hardwick, [29 January?] 1602/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=141>

<sup>212</sup> ID 129, Bess of Hardwick to Elizabeth I, 29 January 1602/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=129>

physical support but many parents also took on extra responsibilities in the family. Some like Bess of Hardwick took on the not insignificant task of parenting their grandchildren in which they experienced similar problems as with their own children. Grandparenting was an extension of the role of parent in old age as grandparents were expected to care for and support their grandchildren.

## **Conclusion**

Marriage is often seen as the rite of passage through which adolescents became adults by taking on responsibilities for their own new family. However, the beginning of a new family life cycle did not invalidate the obligations and expectations of the old one. Children remained in the status of 'child' even when married, as parents continued to be 'parents' even with adult children. Marriage arrangement was often a continuation of the negotiation of adult authority between adolescent children and their parents. Indeed, the majority of incidents in which marriage became a crisis point for a family revolved around the attempts by young men and women to make their own decisions against the views of their parents. This tension in the process of marriage arrangement, which created adults of children, yet needed the judgement of their parents to go ahead, was one that could be fraught as domestic authority within the relationship became more fluid. Throughout the long sixteenth century outward displays of obedience were important to a family's collective reputation. Once children were married they took on their own responsibilities but often continued to rely on their parents, particularly in their own times of crisis. The obligations assumed by parents at the births of their children evidently did not stop at marriage, however much it was viewed as an entry point to adult life. And as parental obligations for the wellbeing of their children did not lessen, nor did the children's obligations to show deference and obey their parents. Although this obedience was negotiated and sometimes challenged by adult children, who did command an increased status, the support of parents throughout life often proved invaluable. Family reputation was closely bound with financial success and it was in the interest of all family members to ensure that others were supported. Parents chose to continue supporting their children to make sure their behaviour did not jeopardise the family's good name. As parents aged, their relationships with their children also shifted. Reciprocal aspects of the relationship became more pronounced as children had a role in supporting their parents financially and emotionally. However, some parents did continue their parental roles into old age caring for children, and grandchildren. In this way, the status of 'parent' did not disappear as parents aged but altered as they continued to uphold their parental

obligations while respecting the authority of their adult children who ran their own households and families. Obligations were perhaps diluted but the basic duty of parents to care for children, and for children to care for elderly parents remained throughout life.

### **Chapter Three – Death**

In 1475, John Paston II wrote a letter to his mother Margaret concerning some aspects of business of the family's estate in Norfolk. In it he included the line, 'I purpose to leeffe alle here and come home to yow and be yowre hosbonde and balyff.'<sup>1</sup> John's father had died in 1466 leaving his twenty-four-year-old son as the head of the family which included his mother, grandmother, and his six siblings. As Margaret's son, John must have meant that he would act as her 'husband' in a legal sense over a case involving the Paston lands. The dual definition of husband as a male spouse, but also the manager of land shows that familial roles also had a practical meaning, here linked to the authority associated with being the head of a household or estate, which any male relation could take on.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Margaret needed her son to act on her behalf as the Paston family head but the letter suggests that the matter was one she was familiar with herself. He needed to act as a 'husband' for her to complete the legal aspects of the business and manage her land, but did not offer any advice or counsel on how it should be conducted. This shared knowledge of the running of family business matters could cause tension as a son's status as family head conflicted with the status his mother held as his elder and parent. An earlier letter from John II to his brother stated 'My modre dothe me moore harme than good', and other evidence from the Paston letters show how the confusion in the status and role of both mother and son after the death of a father could lead to a strained relationship. Authority within the parent-child relationship changed in response to the growing independence of children and the death of a parent further altered this by removing an important authority figure. The patriarchal structures that gave responsibility to eldest sons after the deaths of their fathers, also upheld the sometimes contrary obligations of obedience to a widowed mother. The conflict between adult children and their widowed parents shows us how both children and parents negotiated their relationship into adulthood and how authority was divided between adults. This chapter argues that death affected families by shifting authority further towards children, although some remained with parents because of their age and status.

The problems faced by John Paston in the fifteenth century are echoed throughout the early modern period as English society maintained the system of patrilineal

---

<sup>1</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 486 – 87 (11 September 1475).

<sup>2</sup> "husband, v.". OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89648?rskey=fu8mD3&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 15, 2015).

inheritance. The death of a father had a particular impact on a child as it required a new head for the family and a change in the provision of economic resources. Factors such as age and personality affected this transitional stage in life as eldest sons or guardians took over the financial and social responsibility of a family. For a parent and child this time was one of particular tension, especially between a mother and eldest son as the authority in the family nominally shifted to its new head. However, as a parent, a mother still held informal authority over her son and the change in this dynamic was tested. Christopher Corley notes that few studies have discussed the combination of women's roles as widows and mothers in detail, and this chapter addresses this gap in scholarship.<sup>3</sup> As this thesis considers the family life cycle, this chapter looks at the aftermath of the death of a parent rather than the death itself. While the death of one parent altered the child's relationship with the remaining one, thereby affecting the life cycle, the aftermath changed domestic authority within the family which tell us more about the changing nature of family relationships than the event of the death itself. This chapter looks at how and why kinship relations shifted as a result of a parental death.<sup>4</sup> It explores domestic authority within the family and the practical ways in which this was negotiated between parents and children as their status in the family adapted to their new situation. It shows that reciprocity in the relationship also became more evident when adult children had more responsibility for the future and wellbeing of their family.

Growing interest from historians in the life cycle has meant that death has been increasingly looked on as a lens through which to view early modern social history.<sup>5</sup> The rituals of death have been the focus of some studies and this research has provided an insight into change and continuity in religious practices over this period.<sup>6</sup> Cressy argues that elaborate funeral rituals survived in Protestantism, not necessarily because of continuing Catholic sympathies but because they 'served deep-rooted social and familial needs.'<sup>7</sup> Statistical analysis of early modern England

---

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Corley, 'Preindustrial "Single-Parent" Families: The *Tutelle* in Early Modern Dijon', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 29 (2004), p. 351.

<sup>4</sup> Fuchs, 'Introduction to the Forum on the Changing Faces of Parenthood', pp. 331 – 38.

<sup>5</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*.

<sup>6</sup> David Cressy, 'Death and the social order: the funerary preference of Elizabethan gentlemen', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 5 (1990), pp. 99 – 119; Ralph Houlbrooke, "Public" and "private" in the funerals of the later Stuart gentry: some Somerset examples', *Mortality*, vol. 1 (1996), pp. 163 – 76; Clare Gittings, 'Expressions of Loss in Early Seventeenth-Century England', in *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 19 – 33; Judith W. Hurtig, 'Death in Childbirth: Seventeenth-Century English Tombs and Their Place in Contemporary Thought', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 65 (1983), pp. 603 – 15.

<sup>7</sup> Cressy, 'Death and the social order', p. 99.

has suggested that around 35% of children lost a parent when they were under the age of majority so this was by no means an uncommon crisis for families to negotiate.<sup>8</sup> The roles occupied by families as a result of the changes brought by death had implications for how parents and children related to each other. Heather Dubrow argues that parental death 'unsettled signification itself in the course of unsettling familial roles'.<sup>9</sup> The roles of surviving parents and children were less easily defined by terminology, especially the modern meanings of words like 'parent', 'son' and 'husband', and status in the family was relational in terms of the negotiation of roles. This chapter will begin by showing that families had strong, emotional responses to death, before moving on to look in more detail at the effect of the death of a parent. It will first look at the legal implications for children after the death of their father. The age of a child affected how they dealt with this transition point and how far their mother was involved with their decision-making. Examples will show that mothers played an important role after the death of their husbands in ensuring their children's welfare, and assisting heirs with their new responsibilities as family head. As adult heirs took over as heads of their wider family, they often came into conflict with their mother. The chapter will demonstrate that mothers and children could work together on everyday family business but also that financial matters and marriage arrangements of siblings could cause significant problems as authority was renegotiated between mother and son. This chapter takes an inclusive, family-wide approach by considering siblings and their relationships after the death of a father. This crisis point in family life had an effect on the whole family and letters and legal documents shed light on how individuals took on new roles in the family or adapted their old ones in the wake of a parental death.

### **Emotional responses to death**

Studying the aftermath of death can give an insight into emotional responses to death and into affection between family members. In a letter to John Thynne, a month before his death, Rowland Hayward wrote to him informing him that news of his death had already been reported at the royal court. He expressed happiness that John was not dead although he knew of his 'dangerous sickness'.<sup>10</sup> This letter shows that death was an everyday concern in early modern society, particularly when any

---

<sup>8</sup> This statistic is given in Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost further explored* (London: 2001, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition), p. 115 from research into Clayworth, Nottinghamshire in the 1680s.

<sup>9</sup> Heather Dubrow, 'The Message from Marcade: Parental Death in Tudor and Stuart England', in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, eds. Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (London: Associated University Presses, 1994), p. 153.

<sup>10</sup> Long. TH/VOL/IV f. 231 (23 April 1580).



sickness could be dangerous, but that it still elicited an emotional response from those close to the dying. Scholars of early modern death have acknowledged the emotions involved in studying this point in the life cycle. Cressy argues that, 'far from there being a paucity of emotional warmth in these families, I find their emotional lives to have been complex and intense, especially affected by grieving and loving.'<sup>11</sup> Houlbrooke's work similarly argues that it was the expression of grief which changed through the early modern period, not the grief felt by families.<sup>12</sup> This section places the death of family members and the reaction of parents and children to this family crisis point in its emotional context, exploring how sources about death can offer unique insight into the emotional relationships of families.

Evidence from early modern letters shows that it was customary for condolences to be expressed directly to adult children on the death of their parent. After the death of John Paston III in 1504, the Bishop of London wrote to his son, William Paston IV, advising, 'I wol counsaile and exhorte you to take it as wel and as paciently as ye can, seeying that we al be mortal and borne to dey.'<sup>13</sup> That he chose to send this letter shows it was expected that a child would feel grief on the death of a parent and need emotional support. Similarly, in a letter to John Thynne after the death of his father, a family acquaintance began with condolences about his loss but reassurance that God had delivered him to heaven to await the resurrection that would hopefully come to us all.<sup>14</sup> A letter in the Thynne papers from Henry Neville to John Thynne senior expressed grief after the death of his wife. He signed himself as 'poore and sorrowful' and referred to his young children who had now lost their mother.<sup>15</sup> Although he had graduated from university two years earlier, Henry Oxenden's tutor contacted him after the death of his father to offer support and renew his friendship with the young man, worrying that the death would affect his planned trip to visit him in Oxford.<sup>16</sup> The impact of the death of a parent on both young and adult children is evident in examples stretching across the late medieval and early modern periods and was recognised by immediate family members and wider society.

---

<sup>11</sup> Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, p. 253.

<sup>13</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 2, p. 501 (6 September 1504).

<sup>14</sup> Long. TH/VOL/V f. 138 (24 May 1580).

<sup>15</sup> Long. TH/VOL/IV f. 21 (22 November 1573).

<sup>16</sup> BL Add. MS 27999, f. 80 (3 June 1629).

The family papers of Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester, provide an insight into expressions of grief after family death. One of the most emotional letters in the collection of Robert's letters to his wife Barbara concerns the death of their daughter Philippa in childbirth at the age of twenty-six. He wrote:

Sweetheart. My heart is too full of grief to use many words, especially since your grief must be as much as mine. We have lost as worthy and loving a daughter as ever father and mother had. But God's will be done: and I beseech him that while I live, yourself and those few that be left unto us may be spared. I am weary of this place, and much the more since this woeful accident.<sup>17</sup>

When families were separated at difficult times, letters were the only form of communication available to them to share and deal with their grief. Here the letter takes on special significance as an object of comfort for family members experiencing the desolation of losing a loved one. They have the power to capture a particular moment in time and to preserve memories that might otherwise have been forgotten in an era before the widespread use of diaries. Although letters in this period were rarely self-reflective, letters like the above example do show how an individual felt at a specific moment. In a family context, letters were used to share emotions between relatives and so capture these expressions and feelings as they were shared. The letter shows us how a family could be affected by grief and that they felt free to express this to each other as a way of coping with it. It is not particularly surprising that grief was expressed, but it is important to note how it was expressed in this particular historical context. Families separated by distance used letters to console each other and share their emotions even when not together. It was also societal expectation that friends and acquaintances should contact bereaved family members to express their condolences.

Letters containing this sort of emotional language and expression can be seen as part of a wider culture of emotion and sentiment around death emerging in the early modern period. Certainly publications such as Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mother's Legacie*, a mother's advice text addressed to her unborn child in the event of her death in childbirth, and Philip Stubbes's *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women*, which focused on the life and death of his virtuous wife, suggest an interest in death, and particularly the death of a parent, which became popular in print in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup> As stated in chapter one, both mothers and fathers felt

---

<sup>17</sup> Hannay et al., *Domestic Politics and Family Absence*: pp. 227 – 28 (26 September 1620).

<sup>18</sup> Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie* (1624); Stubbes, *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women* (London: 1591).

the need to write down advice for their children and advice-giving was one of the fundamental duties a parent had to their child. It was imperative that they were able to pass on their wisdom and Jocelin and Stubbes did so explicitly in fear of their own death. This recognition that a child would feel the impact of a parent's death and need advice and help to continue through their adult life becomes much more apparent by the late sixteenth century. Although there is evidence to show expression of loss and grief in the earlier period, its articulation is increasingly found in personal letters over the sixteenth century. This may just be due to the increased number and visibility of source material for the later period and is not necessarily indicative of an increase in grief or its manifestations.

Wills also offer an insight into emotion and affection in families. Although a document with a primarily legal function, wills can indicate the existence and strength of family and kinship bonds. It has been acknowledged that it is often impossible to precisely quantify the nature of bequests, and to interpret the strength of a bond, but it is clear that patterns of bequests do indicate some level of kinship bond.<sup>19</sup> In this way, wills can be considered an emotional document where affection and tension in family relationships is revealed.<sup>20</sup> The dying left conditions and comments in their wills which help us to understand their relationships with their close family members, whether because of a personal item bequest or a condition to stop perceived disobedience on the part of their loved one.<sup>21</sup> Early modern wills have attracted a lot of attention, largely from historians seeking to find evidence of religious change.<sup>22</sup> Formulaic will openings were often specific to religious confessions and some individuals may have used their wills to express a particular religious or political idea, but this was unusual and most followed accepted formulas and outlines for the time

---

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', in *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2000), eds. Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose, p. 64; Also see Will Coster, *Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England: Three Yorkshire Parishes* (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1993) for further work on kinship and wills.

<sup>20</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Wills are included in Lena Cowen Orlin, 'Empty Vessels', in *Everyday Objects*, pp. 299 – 308 on the basis that the wills themselves are objects which tell us about family life, as well as the objects bestowed within them.

<sup>22</sup> For key arguments on this topic see: Margaret Spufford, 'Religious Preambles and the Scribes of Villagers' Wills in Cambridgeshire, 1570 – 1700', in *When Death Do Us Part*, eds. Tom Arkell et al., pp. 144 – 57; Christopher Marsh, 'In the Name of God? Will-making and Faith in Early Modern England', in *The Records of the Nation: The Public Record Office 1838-1988, The British Record Society 1888-1988*, eds. G. H. Martin and Peter Spufford (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1990), pp. 215 – 49; J. D. Alsop, 'Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 40 (1989), pp. 19 – 27; Caroline Litzenberger, 'Local responses to changes in religious policy based on evidence from Gloucestershire wills (1540 – 1580)', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 8 (1993), pp. 417 – 39.

of writing.<sup>23</sup> Although wills have been described as predominantly formulaic documents, some scholars have also acknowledged the possibility of finding sentiment and emotional attachment in them, particularly in women's wills where evidence of female networks has been found.<sup>24</sup>

The surviving wills written by the families under study here show some patterns in the bequests and roles given to family members by the dying. Houlbrooke has argued that the husband-wife bond was the most important within the family, particularly after the Reformation as wills reflected more earthly than spiritual ties, and accordingly, all those with a wife at the time of death, remembered them in their wills.<sup>25</sup> Rowland Whyte, Rowland Hayward and Robert Wroth all left their wives a portion of their estates to live on in their lifetimes and usually all, or the majority of, their moveable household goods, as did the Catholic James Basset, suggesting that this practice was not solely a result of Protestant teaching or expectations on marriage.<sup>26</sup> The incomes were not set with conditions although moveable goods might be. Robert Wroth and Rowland Hayward both left moveable goods to their wives but specified that they must be passed to their eldest sons after their wives' deaths. Robert Wroth allowed his wife, Mary Sidney Wroth, the use of his father's plate until their son turned twenty-one but the use of the moveable goods in their house of Loughton until her death.<sup>27</sup> This latter bequest is typical of early modern wills as, even though women could technically not own goods when they were married, in reality their husbands acknowledged items which belonged to them. Items were rarely specified in these wills and wives were usually left the entirety of the movable household goods, although Robert Wroth explicitly left 'all those Jewells which she used to weare or have ben usuallie in her Custodye' to Mary. Rowland Whyte made a condition in his will that his son would inherit his household stuff, 'when his mother is dead and not before', again acknowledging the ownership of household items to his wife, so much so that she deserved to have use of them for the rest of her life.<sup>28</sup> Although this could be seen more as temporary than complete ownership, as the women did not have the ability to bequeath these items

---

<sup>23</sup> John Craig and Caroline Litzenberger, 'Wills as Religious Propaganda: The Testament of William Tracy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 44 (1993), pp. 415 – 31.

<sup>24</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*; Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', in *When Death Do Us Part*, pp. 38 – 71.

<sup>25</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> Long. TH/VOL/LIII f.69 (Rowland Hayward, 1593); TNA PROB 11/183/403 (Rowland Whyte, August 1639); TNA PROB 11/123/620 (Robert Wroth, 3 June 1614); TNA PROB 11/42A/157 (James Basset, 22 December 1558).

<sup>27</sup> TNA PROB 11/123/620 (3 June 1614).

<sup>28</sup> TNA PROB 11/183/403 (August 1639).

themselves after death, they did have access to the use and value of the goods throughout their lives and these would then be passed to their children.<sup>29</sup> This maintained primogenital inheritance but made provision for wives within the system. These men also remembered their children in their wills. James Basset's wife was pregnant at the time of his death and he made bequests to the unborn child 'if god spare it life'.<sup>30</sup> He also left money to his two sisters, adding, 'for if my debtes weare not so greate as they be I wolde better have remembered them'.<sup>31</sup> This points to the function of a will as a public document and also one where the dying could leave personal comments intended for their friends and family, in this case an apology to siblings for a small portion.

Gender has been a more recent concern for historians of death and the study of wills. Women were an important part of the care of the sick and dying but were marginalised in the legal and administrative side, including will-making.<sup>32</sup> However, women could be given a crucial role within will-making and executing.<sup>33</sup> Women themselves were less likely to make wills than men, but those that have survived have been considered for what they can tell us about women's lives in the early modern period.<sup>34</sup> Women who made wills were also likely to mention other female family members and give them positions of importance. Joan Thynne made her daughters Dorothy and Christian the executors of her will, a role in which she expected they would have a basic level of competence, as she would have done.<sup>35</sup> Although it was usual for men to make their wives executors due to their knowledge of the family business and finances, it seems women like Joan with adult daughters trusted them in a similar way. It is reasonable to assume that her daughters would have had specific knowledge of their mother's affairs. It was important for the dying

---

<sup>29</sup> Joanne Bailey, 'Favoured or oppressed? Married women, property and "coverture" in England, 1660-1800', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 17 (2002), pp. 354 – 55. Her reconsideration of coverture shows that wives had a personal attachment to their possessions even though the goods were technically owned by their husbands.

<sup>30</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/157 (22 December 1558).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth A. Hallam, 'Turning the hourglass: gender relations at the deathbed in early modern Canterbury', *Mortality*, vol. 1 (1996), pp. 61 – 82.

<sup>33</sup> TNA PROB 11/183/753 (Thomas Thynne, 20 October 1640); TNA PROB 11/42A/157. (James Basset, 22 December 1558) and TNA PROB 11/183/403 (Rowland Whyte, August 1639) all gave their wives or daughters prominent roles in the execution of their wills.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Prior, 'Wives and wills 1558 – 1700', *English rural society 1500 - 1800; Essays in honour of Joan Thirsk*, eds. John Chartres and David Hey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 201 – 25; Katherine J. Lewis 'Women, Testamentary Discourse and Life-Writing in Later Medieval England', in *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Noël James Menuge (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 57 – 75.

<sup>35</sup> TNA PROB 11/119/253 (4 March 1612); Alison Wall, 'Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat', *History*, vol. 75 (1990), p. 33.

to leave clear instructions to their family members because the legal implications of death were significant to early modern aristocracy ingrained in a system of patriarchal inheritance.

### **Death, inheritance, and the law**

Early modern families felt the loss of their relatives deeply. However, aristocratic families in particular were defined by the political and economic terms in which they operated. The death of a parent had significant legal and financial consequences for their children. This section explores the legal implications of the death of a father for his heir. This relationship is the best documented, primarily because documents concerning inheritance and the passing on of estates were more likely to be kept and preserved in family archives. In early modern culture, most people did not make a will in advance. Wills were usually written on the deathbed in the presence of several witnesses, which meant that many died intestate, approximately 70% of people in seventeenth-century England.<sup>36</sup> This did not necessarily mean that the arranging of estates would be problematic, as the rules of primogeniture often meant that the eldest son had already inherited part or all of the estates of his father before his death. Wives were usually given part of their dowry lands (the lands they had brought to the marriage) or a portion of their deceased husband's estates which would pass to their son on their death, again following the established rules of primogeniture.<sup>37</sup> It was often the case that only men who had a more complicated arrangement, for example an underage heir, made sure to make a will. A father's death had a profound impact on the life of his eldest son, although the legal implications changed depending on the age of the child.

All heirs under the age of twenty-one came under the monarch's protection after the death of their father. The king or queen could take a portion of the heir's estates and keep or sell the wardship as they wished. H. E. Bell suggests that the poor condition of many of the records of the Court of Wards and Liveries has discouraged historians from making a full account of them, although work by Joel Hurstfield gives an excellent context to the background and practice of the Court of Wards and Liveries, showing how it developed from the feudal practices of medieval monarchy where land needed to be controlled for the purpose of military call-up, to a system where

---

<sup>36</sup> Amy Louise Erickson, 'Property and widowhood in England 1660 – 1840', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Cavallo and Warner, p. 152.

<sup>37</sup> Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 25.

wards became purely a method of income generation for the monarch.<sup>38</sup> However, he also argues that the Elizabethan Court of Wards did aim to protect the interests of minor heirs by representing them against dishonest landlords and guardians.<sup>39</sup> More recent research has focused on the portrayal of wardships in literature indicating that it was a commonly understood experience in society.<sup>40</sup> Heirs under the age of twenty-one faced uncertainty in the wake of their father's death and could find the course of their life altered by the decisions of their appointed guardian. In 1601 William, Lord Herbert, took the lead in arranging his own affairs by writing to Master of the Court of Wards, Robert Cecil, himself. He wrote that his father would probably not live another forty-eight hours and sought support from Cecil in his aim not to become a ward of the state, or have his wardship granted to someone who would not look after his interests, as he was only months away from reaching his majority.<sup>41</sup>

Wardship was a controversial practice in early modern England for this reason. It meant control over the estates, wealth, education, and marriage of a nobleman, and influence in this formative period of life was invaluable. Underage heirs automatically became wards of the state and the monarch could then decide if they wanted to retain or sell the wardship. Wardships were fought over, and bought and sold between different aristocrats hoping to gain influence and expand their own networks and resources. In 1604 a bill was brought to Parliament by Robert Wroth senior seeking to abolish the practice. Wroth was probably acting as Robert Cecil's spokesman and Pauline Croft's article on the 1604 Parliament suggests that the bill may have been in line with government thinking that the monarch might be better served by a fixed annual payment than continuing to collect feudal duties.<sup>42</sup> As Noël James Menuge argues, wardship was 'about a series of complex feudal

---

<sup>38</sup> Joel Hurstfield, 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', pp. 605 – 12; H. E. Bell *An introduction to the history and records of the Court of Wards and Liveries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in English Legal History, 1953), p. 186.

<sup>39</sup> Hurstfield, 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', p. 611.

<sup>40</sup> Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and his Society* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 76; Noël James Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Cecil Papers 76/5 (18 Jan 1600/1).

<sup>42</sup> Pauline Croft, 'Wardship in the Parliament of 1604', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 2 (1983), pp. 39 – 40; Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris (eds.), 'Sir Robert Wroth I (c. 1539 – 1606), of Durants (alias Gartons), Enfield, Mdx.; Loughton (or Lucton) Hall, Essex and Leadenhall Street, London', *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2010), accessed online on 30/07/14 at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/wroth-sir-robert-1539-1606>; Nicholas Tyacke, 'Wroth, Cecil and the Parliamentary Session of 1604', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 50 (1977), pp. 120 – 25.

relationships, in which personal feelings are subservient to the greater good of the patrilineal ethos' and wardship was certainly one way of dealing with the problem of minor heirs in a society organised by patriarchal primogeniture.<sup>43</sup> The practice continued in much the same way until the mid-seventeenth century when, as Hurstfield argues, it contributed towards the crisis of monarchy in the English Civil War as opposition grew to the collection of feudal dues.<sup>44</sup>

As stated above, it was often only men with complicated circumstances, like an underage heir, who chose to make a will. This shows that fathers attempted to assert some control over the future of their eldest son and family inheritance by specifying conditions in their wills. In 1614, Mary Sidney's husband Robert Wroth died, leaving his wife and month-old son, James. His will set out the conditions for the protection of the infant. He specified that he knew his son would officially come under the protection of the king as a ward of the state and made his wishes clear by writing in his will that he intended his son to be looked after by family members from both his side of the family by his uncle, brother, and cousin, and from his wife's by her father Robert Sidney, and her cousin, the earl of Pembroke.<sup>45</sup> Owning the wardship of a wealthy heir could be a good investment as it meant control over the education and marriage arrangement of a wealthy aristocrat, as well as control of their estates. James Wroth died in July 1616, two years after his father, so Robert's efforts to protect his estates for his son were in vain, but his detailed will gives us an insight into the lengths parents went to in order to secure their eldest son's inheritance. The anticipation of death in these cases meant that tensions and anxieties about loss extended beyond the specific moment of death, affecting parents before their death and their children after it.

Mothers commonly sought guardianship of their children and many petitioned the monarch and Master of the Court of Wards for custody.<sup>46</sup> This was one way in which women could exercise authority as mothers, albeit by working within the patriarchal system of patronage.<sup>47</sup> Mothers could be granted wardships directly, but many chose to go through a male relative that they could trust. When the Earl of Rutland sought the wardship of his niece in 1587, he was advised to drop the request by Lord

---

<sup>43</sup> Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law*, p. 128.

<sup>44</sup> Hurstfield, 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', p. 612.

<sup>45</sup> TNA PROB 11/123/620 (3 June 1614).

<sup>46</sup> BL Add. MS 34079 f. 7 – 8 (25 November 1564), CP 26/48 (1 May 1594), HMC Rutland p. 31 (c.1547-51), p. 201 (24 July 1586), p. 145 (6 December 1582).

<sup>47</sup> James Daybell, 'Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition', *Women's Writing*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2006), pp. 3 – 22.



Hunsdon partly because he was next to inherit her lands after her death so was too close in blood, but also because his sister, mother of the girl, 'cannot but take it unkindly that you should ask it, as she is her only daughter.'<sup>48</sup> Relatives were usually expected to have the child's interests at heart; however, in this case, it must have been feared that his own interests were so close that they could damage hers. The care of her mother was also an important factor as it seems she wished to remain the main carer for her daughter. When Honor Lisle's eldest son, John Basset, died leaving an infant son, Arthur, the infant's wardship was granted to his well-connected uncle James Basset, who was private secretary to Queen Mary I. The will of James Basset, shows his concern for his nephew and ward. By the time of James's death in 1558, Arthur was close to the age of majority and James tried to leave conditions for this in his will. It takes into account the almost adult age of his nephew, suggesting that whoever purchased his wardship should work with him in running the lands that made up his inheritance, giving him all the interest from the lands, and also that no other allocation of his lands should be made.<sup>49</sup>

When eldest sons inherited their father's title and estates as children, this could allow a mother to take on a significant role of responsibility on behalf of her son. In 1588 Roger Manners became the fifth earl of Rutland aged twelve, following the death of his father. His mother Elizabeth, countess of Rutland, assumed the control of her son's estates during his minority, but by the time Roger was eighteen this had begun to attract comment. William Cecil wrote to Elizabeth after being surprised, 'In conversation with the young Earl I found that he was quite ignorant of his estate [...] I beg that before his departure you will acquaint him fully therewith, and will also let me understand the same.'<sup>50</sup> Roger's great-uncle also commented to his brother that the Countess 'deleth strangely' with the Earl and would not tell him of her doings.<sup>51</sup> On his mother's death in 1595, Roger Manners contacted his great-uncle Roger for advice who also expressed some surprise about the ignorance his nephew was in over the value of his estates:

I am glad you take so good a course, and are careful of your estate. I am sorry you find your estate no better, but I think that if you peruse all my lady's letters and papers you will find some light to know what is become of the rest. I cannot believe that there is not more money concealed.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 220 (26 June 1587).

<sup>49</sup> TNA PROB 11/42A/157 (22 December 1558).

<sup>50</sup> HMC Rutland p. 324-5 (Dec 1594).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p. 325 (Dec 30 1594).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 327 – 38 (April 9 1595).

It is unclear why Elizabeth had acted so secretly in her son's affairs and also why she did not include him in her decision-making, or even inform him of the particulars and values of his estate. It was customary for aristocratic mothers or other guardians to take control of a child's inheritance on their behalf but it was clearly unusual that Elizabeth did not share any knowledge with her son as he approached his majority and adulthood. Her death seems to have been the only way for Roger to take control of his own affairs. Taking responsibility for your child's future wellbeing was good parenting, but not recognising your child's growth towards adulthood and including them in adult decisions, clearly was not. Had the countess of Rutland lived long enough, her attempts to assert control over her son may have precipitated a crisis in their relationship.

Although they were legally seen as old enough to manage their own affairs, some children who had already passed the legal age of majority, did require help from family employees and acquaintances to manage the process. When Sir John Thynne died in 1580, letters sent to his son John at this time show the help and guidance he received in ordering his new estates. Family employee Morice Brown represented Thynne's interests at court and wrote to him offering advice and explaining how he was arranging the conditions of the surveyorship of his father's legacy, Longleat House, with the Lord Chancellor.<sup>53</sup> This reveals that even adult children needed guidance at this point of the family life cycle when they were expected to become head of their family and thus financially responsible for the main estates and lands. Another letter to John Thynne also shows the variety of obligations a son could inherit from a father. In 1581, friend Arthur Hopton sent a letter asking him to bestow favour on the bearer. He asked him 'to holde those thinges of you which your father graunted hym' and in return he would gain the service and support of the man in question.<sup>54</sup> So, as well as inheriting lands and taking on the financial concerns of their fathers, eldest sons also took on their social obligations and replaced them as patrons. Friend John Stanhope warned Gilbert Talbot, seventh earl of Shrewsbury, after the death of his father in 1590 that he must beware of any enemies his father had had, advising that, as the new earl, he should 'forgett and forgyve them, and for such let his gretnes and goodnes be knowne as yt neyther feares the malyce of an enemy, nor wyll refuse the good wyll of a frend.'<sup>55</sup> At the end of his letter Stanhope apologised in case his advice seemed too bold

---

<sup>53</sup> Long. TH/VOL/V f. 138 (24 May 1580).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid f. 185 (19 March 1581/2).

<sup>55</sup> HMC Bath pp. 100 – 02 (22 November 1590).

(Gilbert was approaching forty in 1590 so certainly no longer a young man), but obviously thought it important that the new earl received the advice anyway.

Legal aspects of inheritance could cause disagreements in a wider family context. The death of George Clifford, third earl of Cumberland, in 1605, precipitated a wider family crisis centred on the fact that he had only a daughter surviving him. Anne Clifford was fifteen years old and as his sole heir she expected to inherit his land; however, he made a will which specified that all his lands should go to the male heirs of his brother Francis who subsequently became the fourth earl of Cumberland. Anne wrote that he did this 'for the preservation of his name and house' presumably because he did not want his family's lands to be subsumed into the estates of his daughter's husband, and to preserve the Clifford name.<sup>56</sup> This led to a lengthy legal battle led by Anne's mother seeking to restore Anne's inheritance. The family archives held in Kendal, Cumbria contain several volumes commissioned by Anne when she was in her sixties which document her life and the life of her family. She included copies of various documents relating to the inheritance dispute and it is clear that her mother, Margaret, took the primary role in pursuing it. According to Anne it was 'the chiefest of all her worldly desires' that her daughter should come into her inheritance.<sup>57</sup> Margaret entered several pleadings to the Court of Wards and Liveries on behalf of her daughter between 1605 and her death in 1616. Their main point of argument was that apparently there had been a charter from the reign of Edward II which said the Clifford lands should descend to the direct heir regardless of gender.<sup>58</sup> However, this document no longer existed so Margaret and Anne could not prove that she had the right to overturn her father's will. In the account of her life commissioned by Anne in the 1640s, she wrote that her mother showed a brave spirit and never gave into opposition during the suits concerning her inheritance.<sup>59</sup> There are surviving letters between the two women which show this commitment by Margaret to do all she could to uphold her daughter's interests.

In a letter of January 1616 she wrote about her duty to Anne as a mother, 'I will do what is it for a mother and you the like for a child'.<sup>60</sup> Here Margaret's duties and obligations as a mother were clear and there seemed to be no hesitancy in following this path. However, for Anne it was not so simple. Anne had married Richard Sackville, third earl of Dorset, in 1609 and her role as wife, daughter, and heiress

---

<sup>56</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3 p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3 pp. 145 – 51.

<sup>58</sup> Clifford, 'Prologue', *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>59</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3 pp. 145 – 51.

<sup>60</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 f. 16 (14 January 1616/7).

brought her into conflict with her husband. Richard wanted to sell Anne's rights to the lands she *had* inherited from her father for money, something neither Anne nor her mother agreed to. Anne's letters to her mother at this time asked for advice and helped her reach a decision about the situation. In one she wrote that 'I will do nothing without your La[dys]hip's knowledge therefore I beseech you let me know your resolution as soon as possible you may' so we can see that she held her mother's counsel in the highest esteem.<sup>61</sup> In her replies to Anne, Margaret provided support for her in this difficult time. Although she advised Anne to 'do those parts to your husband that are due' she also criticised his behaviour.<sup>62</sup> In September 1615, she quoted from the Bible saying, 'he is worse than an infidel that profits not for his wife and family than he that has not a heart' and 'alas it semes it is with him.'<sup>63</sup> But again, advised Anne not to cross him with words but use what gentle persuasion she could, and not to mention her to him.<sup>64</sup>

Anne gave birth to a daughter in 1614 and her own mother linked in Anne's obligations to her daughter, with her own to Anne. In relation to her contention with her husband she wrote that, 'his disistimacion of you may hinder your children' and referred to 'the wrong you had by your father, now your husband and your child's father' so drawing links between generations of the expectations of parental duty.<sup>65</sup> She was fulfilling hers, as was Anne, in contrast to Anne's father and husband who had not acted to fulfil theirs.<sup>66</sup> Anne was sometimes required to defend her husband against her mother's descriptions of him as 'unkind'.<sup>67</sup> In a letter of 1615 she wrote that he was 'a very kind loving and dear father and in everything will I command him, saving in this bisness of my land.'<sup>68</sup> Richard's letters to Anne suggests that he was, in fact, a loving father. In a letter of 1617 he endearingly referred to his daughter as 'the Little Lady with the hot foot who dreamed her Lord father was stolen away with Bulbuggars and cried so sweetly with her little warme teares', seemingly remembering a moment of domestic harmony from a time together.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Anne's roles as wife and daughter (and heiress) were at odds as she was obligated

---

<sup>61</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/6 f. 45 (20 February 1616).

<sup>62</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 f. 13 (30 July 1615).

<sup>63</sup> This quote seems to be from 1 Timothy 5:8 King James Bible – 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.'

<sup>64</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/5 f. 14 (22 September 1615).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. f. 13, 14 (30 July 1615, 22 September 1615).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. f. 14 (22 September 1615).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. f. 19 (8 April c. 1615).

<sup>68</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/6 f. 42 (20 November 1615).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. f. 1 (6 Oct 1617).

to show obedience to her husband and to her mother, and also had a strong conviction (shared with her mother) to uphold her inheritance. Their relationship was one of care, support and reassurance in a period of tension where the death of Anne's father caused a renegotiation of authority within the family, and for Anne in particular as she defended her rights as heiress against her subordinate position to her husband and uncle. In December 1615, Anne wrote to her mother that, 'so long as you live and are there, there is still hope for me.'<sup>70</sup> The support of her mother aided her own fight and Anne grieved deeply when she died in May 1616. She wrote in her own history of her 'unspeakable grief' particularly as she was not with her mother at her death.<sup>71</sup> And her account of her mother's life story contains several paragraphs about her virtues and strength (more than her father's). Anne eventually did come into her inheritance after her cousin died without heirs in 1643 and as her commissioned history shows, she made sure the contribution her mother had made to fight her battles alongside her was recorded for posterity. James Daybell's recent article on mothers and daughters' correspondence, which includes an extended analysis of Anne and Margaret Clifford's letters, shows that 'the balance of power fluctuated and developed over time and over the course of the female life cycle.' Certainly it can be seen that the support from her own mother was crucial as Anne aged and grew into her roles as wife, mother, and heiress.<sup>72</sup>

Wider family conflict was certainly a possibility after the death of the family head. The death of a parent had legal implications for the heir who, if underage, would be almost completely at the mercy of whoever was appointed their guardian. Men attempted to put into place conditions for the wardship of their heirs and mothers had some influence over their upbringing, but it is clear that the death of a parent in this situation altered the course of a child's life, and the course of a family's inheritance. Adult children were also legally and financially affected by their father's death. Although it allowed them to inherit in their own right, these children had to take on the network of employees and acquaintances made by their father to maintain family interests. The question of family interests was one they now had direction over. Conflict arose in families from this change in authority when a new family head could choose to change priorities. For a female heir like Anne Clifford, her gender affected her position within the family. Her authority as her father's heir was limited and she relied on the support and active power of her mother to stand

---

<sup>70</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/3/44/6 f. 43 (6 December 1615).

<sup>71</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3 pp. 203 – 08.

<sup>72</sup> Daybell, 'Social Negotiations in Correspondence', p. 3.

against her uncle and husband to support her new role and allow her to exercise her new adult authority.

### **Support and tension after death: widowed mothers and eldest sons**

The impact of the death of a father on his eldest son was significant as he would inherit the family estates and become nominal head of his family, including patriarchal responsibility for his mother and siblings. Barbara Harris describes this as 'a major shift' in the power relationship between mother and son, asserting that this transition point must have been difficult in most families and Daybell emphasises the nuanced female experience of power which was dynamic and fluctuating between individual relationships.<sup>73</sup> Focusing on case studies provides us with examples of individual responses to this family crisis point, but wider trends and reactions can be seen from these examples. Heal and Holmes argue that gentry families had theoretical models to fall back on in times of stress and worked from the template of the nuclear family of parents and children with varying responsibilities to other kin.<sup>74</sup> This section will show how mothers and sons could come into conflict over inheritance issues when this nuclear structure had been altered by the death of the male head, the husband and father. In their new role as family head, eldest sons sometimes relied on their mothers to help with their transition to a new patriarchal role, however others took the opportunity to assert their own authority and challenge that of their mother. Although they were subordinate to their mothers in their role as 'child', the responsibility as head of the family gave them increased status in the patriarchal hierarchy. This initial period of transition saw mothers and sons adapting their roles and power within the family to their new circumstances.

The increase in research on widows has opened up their experiences and place in pre-modern society.<sup>75</sup> Widows have been shown as an active and significant part of litigation and other legal cases in the late sixteenth century.<sup>76</sup> Research into legal documents associated with the women considered in this thesis uncovers information supporting these ideas. A Chancery record of 1480 – 83 shows Margaret Paston defending a case against a male tenant, William Pecok, who accused her of

---

<sup>73</sup> Barbara J. Harris, 'Property, Power, and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England', *Signs*, vol. 15 (1990), p. 630; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, p. 176.

<sup>74</sup> Heal and Holmes, p. 52.

<sup>75</sup> Capp, *When Gossips Meet*.

<sup>76</sup> Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*; Tim Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

withholding documents about his lease on part of her dower lands.<sup>77</sup> She was trusted to keep the legal documents responsible for the tenancy agreement and held responsible for not making them available to him. Moving into the sixteenth century, Bess of Hardwick was involved in several suits relating to property she had inherited from her four marriages.<sup>78</sup> An Exchequer record from 1588 relating to a widow, Mary Wroth, was proof of her liability to pay tax in the county of Essex.<sup>79</sup> It detailed that she was resident in lands in Lucton, Essex and was required to pay taxes there. Robert Sidney's eldest daughter Mary married into the Wroth family in 1604 and some years after being widowed in 1614, entered into a legal dispute in the Court of Chancery with a trader, John Hull.<sup>80</sup> Mary employed him as a merchant to purchase goods for her but when she delayed payment to him because she was awaiting rent payments herself, he took legal action against her. She requested in the complaint that she would like him to 'deal plainly' with her. This request by an adult woman and widow to be treated equally by a man she had employed indicates her independence in widowhood, as do other details in the document. Mary Wroth was clearly in charge of her own spending and household accounts and received rent money from her own properties. No deceased husbands or eldest sons are mentioned in any of these documents, suggesting that, following the death of their husbands, these women were capable of administering their own affairs, paying taxes, and initiating or responding to legal cases without assistance from their male heads of household; indeed it was expected. Mary Prior argues that the Court of Chancery 'by tradition and conscious policy' sought the protection and development of women's interests when their estates were held in trust, but these cases suggest it also considered their cases when they held property in their own right, and tried them in equal status to male complainants and witnesses.<sup>81</sup> Most widows appear to have acted completely independently, administering their own lands and making money through their own initiatives. However, the importance of the relationship between widowed mothers and their eldest sons is evident in the other documents considered in this chapter and has been acknowledged in work on late medieval and

---

<sup>77</sup> C 1/61/299 (c. 1480 – 83).

<sup>78</sup> TNA C 2/JasI/S35/60 (1595); TNA STAC 5/L34/2 (1594/5); ID 102, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Willoughby, 8 May 1594, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=102>

<sup>79</sup> TNA E 115/400/25 (1588).

<sup>80</sup> TNA C 2/JasI/W2/63 (May 1623).

<sup>81</sup> Mary Prior, 'Wives and wills 1558 – 1700', pp. 201 – 25.

early modern widows.<sup>82</sup> Consideration of this crisis point over the long sixteenth century shows the importance of this event in the parent-child relationship.

Although the death of a father is largely viewed in terms of its disruption to family life and the cause of tension and strained relations, it is important to consider that it could also bring about partnership and support between mother and son. Both were facing an upheaval in their individual lives and a change in the structure and authority of the wider family and, especially in the initial period after the death, eldest sons required support. On becoming the Earl of Rutland aged only twelve after his father's death, Roger Manners wrote to his mother asking directly for her support; 'now more and more – if it be possible – increase your carefull love and loving care for me.'<sup>83</sup> Mothers were also accepted as having the authority to advise adult sons, even as widows. In the case of Anne Bacon, who dispensed advice to her adult sons throughout her widowhood, Mair states that 'her control over the spiritual and physical wellbeing of her son was culturally accepted'.<sup>84</sup> The Paston letters provide earlier evidence of mothers giving advice and support to their adult sons at a point in their lives when they needed guidance. After her husband's death, Agnes Paston wrote to her younger son Edmond to remind him of the advice his late father had wanted him to live by, both in his education, that he should continue to study law, and in the matter of the family estates that it was 'yowre fadris laste wille' that his lands in Paston were maintained by his children.<sup>85</sup> Here she acted as an intermediary passing on her husband's wishes, but also, with her authority as Edmond's mother, emphasising parts of her late husband's advice that she also agreed with. To her eldest son John I she repeated her husband's advice about business matters word-for-word, 'in lityle bysynes lyeth myche reste' and reassured him that his siblings would stand by him as family head, 'and as for 3oure breperen, pei wylle I knowe certeynly laboren all þat in hem lyeth for 3ow'.<sup>86</sup> This comment suggests that John had been unsure about his role and shows that his mother still had a place in reassuring him and providing a link between her children. John's son, John II, had a similar relationship with his mother and sought correspondence with her as an adult, after the death of his father. His letters to her were often in a

---

<sup>82</sup> Harris *English Aristocratic Women*, and, 'Property, Power, and Personal Relations'; Many of Christopher Corley's assertions in his article 'Preindustrial "Single-Parent" Families' on early modern French widows resonate with her work on England.

<sup>83</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 242 (4 March 1587 – 8).

<sup>84</sup> Mair, "Material Lies", p. 60.

<sup>85</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 27 – 28 (4 February 1445).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43 – 44 (29 October, perhaps 1465).



deferential tone, for example, 'Please it yow to weet þat I herde nott from yow off longe tyme, whyche cawsythe me to be ryght hevye.'<sup>87</sup> This is something Mair notes in the letters of Anthony Bacon around 100 years later although she attributes it to his need to defuse 'the more censorious elements' of his mother's letters.<sup>88</sup> As will be shown below, John II also negotiated some tense situations with his mother by letter, though other letters show a genuine desire to hear from her and engage with her about family issues they both had knowledge of.

The most common and significant ground for tension between a widowed mother and eldest son was over the inheritance and management of family property. In aristocratic and gentry families, wives were usually involved with the running of estates, often managing them while their husbands were away and so had a great deal of knowledge about them. When their husband died and their son took over the responsibilities, this could lead to disagreements in an area where the mother had knowledge and still exercised a dominant position. As his wife, Margaret Paston referred in a letter to a dispute between John I and his mother Agnes over one of the Paston properties:

my modere told me that she thynkyth ryght strange that she may not haue the profectys of Clyre ys place in peasabyll wyse for you. She seyt it ys hers and she hath payd most therefore yet, and she sayth she wyll haue the profectys therof [...] In gode feyth I hyre moch langage of the demenyng betwene you and herre. I wold ryght fayn, and soo wold many moo of youre frendys, that it were other-wyse by-twene you then it ys<sup>89</sup>

This dispute was in relation to a property that Agnes argued she was entitled to as part of her inheritance as William Paston's widow, and she was unhappy with the way John was organising the income from it. As Margaret commented on how his friends were aware of the situation and wished it were less fractious, this suggests that the disagreement was sufficiently well known to be commented on by those outside of the immediate family. Agnes appears to have been a particularly dominant mother and widow in the lives of her sons and disagreements over her lands continued after her death. Further evidence of her powerful position in the family is shown by a letter from her daughter Elizabeth who wrote asking Agnes about the

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 466 – 67 (30 July 1473).

<sup>88</sup> Mair, 'Material Lies', pp. 62 – 63.

<sup>89</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 295 – 99 (10 May 1465). In this letter Margaret uses the term 'my modere' to refer to her mother-in-law, Agnes. This was common practice in the late Middle Ages and throughout the early modern period.

jointure she had been promised in her dowry left over from her father's will.<sup>90</sup> It is notable that Elizabeth contacted her mother to make sure that she obtained what she had been promised from her father's will, and not her brother who was technically the head of her family. Her letter also shows signs of being carefully composed. It is written in three different hands with the original signature crossed out and moved further down the page, as would be appropriate for this kind of formal letter intended to make a good impression.

As Vivienne Larminie observes in her study of the Newdigate family in the seventeenth century, 'chance and individual character emerge [...] as key variables in the equation of material and personal lament that constituted family life and fortunes.'<sup>91</sup> She presents the case of John Newdigate II who had enduring issues after his father's death in attempting to provide for his younger siblings.<sup>92</sup> This situation was not always problematic, for example in the Gawdy family, Bassingbourne Gawdy II willingly ensured that his younger siblings and half-siblings received their fair share of their fathers' inheritance.<sup>93</sup> However, a draft will found in the papers of the Gawdy family shows how important some parents found it to make sure that their eldest sons were held to account over providing for their younger siblings.<sup>94</sup> Framlingham Gawdy, cousin of Bassingbourne, had five sons and made very clear in his will that the eldest, William, should inherit but pay amounts of money to his younger brothers when they each reached age twenty-one. The will goes on to describe that, if William did not pay these sums then he forfeited his claim and second son Framlingham was to be heir. If Framlingham did not pay the sums to his brothers then he forfeited his inheritance and third son Thomas became heir, and so on. For his sons who were under twenty-one, Framlingham stated that their elder brother should pay for their educations until they received their full inheritance payment. He specified that if their educations were not paid for then they were given permission to go onto any of his lands and take the equivalent worth. The long and detailed will left no margin for error and Framlingham's sons were bound by it to provide for their younger siblings at risk of losing their own inheritance. Similarly, Robert Wroth the elder wrote in his will that £700 should be split equally between his three younger sons Thomas, John and Henry during the lifetime of Thomas, but, if Thomas did not pay his brothers their equal share he would forfeit his own right to

---

<sup>90</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 206 – 07 (3 January 1459).

<sup>91</sup> Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture*, p. 25.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22 – 44.

<sup>93</sup> BL Add. MS 36990 ff. 94, 136 (c. 1630).

<sup>94</sup> BL Add. MS 36990 ff. 96 – 98 (1630).

the bequest.<sup>95</sup> Although there is evidence in many families of the enduring bond between siblings throughout life, this was perhaps an astute decision on the part of these fathers to force their children to meet their obligations as elder brothers when they might have other responsibilities that they viewed as more important.<sup>96</sup>

Not all families had a legal document to hold eldest sons to account. In the event of a father's intestate death, eldest sons were expected to ensure provision for their younger siblings. In these cases, mothers often took on the role of representing younger children in disputes over inheritance, in conflict with their eldest son.<sup>97</sup> Harris suggests that, as mothers had less interest in primogeniture and the preserving of large estates belonging to her husband's family, they might take on the interests of their younger sons in opposition to their eldest son.<sup>98</sup> As primogeniture was a system ingrained into the aristocratic classes of early modern England, they would have seen its benefits, but it is not surprising to find mothers acting on behalf of younger children. Because the eldest son was already provided for by his father's estates, younger children were often in greater need of support. Women were not questioning this key principle in maintaining patriarchal society but they tried to make arrangements for their younger children within it. Harris's work analyses women's role in these matters to c.1550 but similar concerns can be seen in the behaviour of women in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

John Thynne died intestate in 1604, leaving his wife Joan, and four children. His eldest son Thomas was of age at the time of his father's death and thus inherited his lands but documents from the Thynne family papers show that in the years following his father's death, Thomas did not willingly provide for his younger siblings. Joan made a petition that Thomas should provide a portion of money per year for them.<sup>99</sup> Documents which follow the petition show the disagreements over the implementation of these decisions, with Thomas arguing that 'paying such great portions to his sisters [...] shall thereby undertake more than his estate can bear'. Joan maintained her demands that Thomas use some of his inheritance to provide for his siblings, attempting to secure money for her daughters (to be paid in instalments at certain notable points in their lives such as coming of age or marriage) and a parsonage for her younger son. There was clearly tension over these

---

<sup>95</sup> TNA PROB 11/107/101 (8 February 1606).

<sup>96</sup> Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p. 41 suggests that parents were crucial in ensuring the strength of sibling bonds by providing a link between them.

<sup>97</sup> Harris, 'Property, Power, and Personal Relations', p. 625.

<sup>98</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 606 – 32.

<sup>99</sup> Long. TH/VOL/LIV ff. 55 – 6 (c. 1605).

negotiations as they went on for many years after John Thynne's death. In one document Joan described that her son was dealing 'unkindly' with her, but she could not forget her love for him and the natural care of her younger children who would be left destitute.<sup>100</sup> According to this report, Joan struggled with her concern for her younger children against her love for her eldest son. Joan and Thomas's relationship was already strained as he had married without his parents' permission as a teenager and the change in family authority after the death of his father appeared to strain their relationship further. A letter from Thomas Thynne's sister Dorothy in 1606 shows her acting as a mediator between them asking him in very deferential tones to consider visiting them:

If you please to visit my mother here, I assure you she hath often said in my hearing that you should be very hertelie welcome to her and I dare presume further to saie, that if you be not altered more in your love towards her, then hers is towards you, my selfe with my sister may be made soe happie to enioy your presence often with us: as we both very earnestly desire.<sup>101</sup>

Joan continued to press Thomas to pay the money owed to his siblings, right up until her death in 1612. Her letters from 1611 are couched in deferential and loving tones, offering her blessings to him, however the content is much sterner. She and her daughter were clearly well informed about how to handle Dorothy's payment and she was keen to know how the money would be paid so they could put it 'forth for her best profit'.<sup>102</sup> She chastised Thomas for making her look incompetent because of the delay in receiving the money that she was seeking to arrange, and appealed to both his reputation and his 'brotherly care' of Dorothy to entreat him to pay the money.<sup>103</sup> By this point in their relationship, an appeal to his care of her was no longer an option but she still saw that his treatment of his siblings had a bearing on his own reputation. This is a good example of how an intestate death could lead to tension between parents and children where mothers had to uphold the rights of their younger children against their eldest son. Joan Thynne appeared to lament the declining relationship with her son although family correspondence shows they never reconciled. The disputes over Thomas's payments to his siblings continued for many years after their father's death, and the petitions and agreements involved in arranging the inheritance took a heavy toll on the family's relationships.

### **Changes in domestic authority: eldest sons as fathers, sons, and brothers**

---

<sup>100</sup> Long. TH/VOL/LVIII ff. 7 – 9 (c. 1605).

<sup>101</sup> Long. TH/VOL/VIII f. 25 (12 October 1606).

<sup>102</sup> Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women*, pp. 51 – 52 (25 August 1611).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52 (24 September 1611), pp. 52 – 53 (Oct – Nov 1611).

After the death of a father, families were required to become more flexible in the roles and duties they undertook. Their relationships often became more reciprocal as widowed parents, eldest sons and younger siblings relied on each other for support. In research on younger sons in Tudor and Stuart England it has been shown that many writers sought to highlight the often desperate situation of younger sons who could be entirely reliant on their eldest brother for financial support and patronage.<sup>104</sup> As we have seen, mothers could be crucial actors in ensuring eldest sons met these responsibilities. Over everyday matters involving the care of younger siblings elder brothers moved between willingness and unwillingness over their new role as head of the family. In the Paston family, elder brothers sometimes seemed happy to accept responsibility, but often tried to revert this back to their mother when she delegated the task of dealing with the everyday concerns of their siblings to them. This was an area where the overlap of domestic authority between mothers and sons could cause tension. Some letters between John Paston II and his mother Margaret sound somewhat terse. In one he stated that he did not need to 'be qwykynynd wyth a letter' from her or be told what to do.<sup>105</sup> A letter from Margaret to John shows that she could be authoritarian in her commands to him, in one writing, 'I charge you and require you þat ye se your brothere be holpyn in hast.'<sup>106</sup> Mothers and sons sometimes worked together over the concerns of younger siblings although it seems there was confusion over whose responsibility it was depending on different requests. The letters of Margaret and her eldest son John II vary in their formality and use of the conventions expected in formal correspondence, demonstrating the flexibility in their relationship as John took on his new familial role. He did not always include the long, formal greeting usually found in letters from children to parents, perhaps because their letters were so frequent it was seen as unnecessary but also an indication of the equality in their relationship. Over everyday family matters their letters are rather functional and straight to the point, often on irregular sized pieces of paper. His letters home are sometimes jointly addressed to her and his younger brother John III indicating the collaboration of mother and sons after the death of the family head.

This thesis has argued that advice given to adolescent children was often by the dominant parental figure or the person who had the best relationship with the child,

---

<sup>104</sup> Joan Thirsk, 'Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century', *History*, vol. 54, no. 182 (1969), pp. 358 – 77 is a comprehensive look at this although omits to recognise the support that mothers could provide to younger children.

<sup>105</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 405 – 07 (15 September 1469).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 344 – 45 (12 September 1469).

whether that was a mother, father or other family member. In discussions between widowed mothers and their eldest sons about the education of adolescent siblings this is also evident. Agnes Paston was the main correspondent about her son Clement who was at Cambridge in the 1450s. She wrote directly to his tutors to advise them on appropriate discipline, and organised the buying of his clothes, and did not pass on this duty to her eldest son.<sup>107</sup> In 1469, Margaret engaged her son John II in a discussion about where his sister Margery should be placed in service. She wrote, 'I wuld ye shuld purvey for your suster to be wyth my lady of Oxford or wyth my lady of Bedford or in summe othere wurchepfull place where as ye think best, and I wull help to here fyndyng', so working with him to find her a place.<sup>108</sup> She made suggestions but also allowed that he might, with her help, decide on a suitable placement himself.

Comparison with the early seventeenth-century Oxenden family, also show a widowed mother and eldest son working together to provide for younger son James at university in Cambridge. James wrote jointly to his brother Henry, aged only twenty at this time but now head of the family, and mother asking them to send books, clothes, maintenance payments, and informing them of his health.<sup>109</sup> He asked his brother for books and money and asked his mother for clothes showing a division of responsibility, possibly similar to when his father was alive, although in another letter he reminded his brother of a promise to send him a new gown.<sup>110</sup> James appears to have seen his provision as the responsibility of both his brother and mother, though it seems to be divided along gendered lines. Henry Oxenden continued to provide for his brother's education, arranging a trip to Oxford with some of his friends in the hope that James would be elected to a place there.<sup>111</sup> He also sent his younger sister money when she requested it.<sup>112</sup> In the late fifteenth century, John Paston II took on responsibility for his younger brothers' educations largely because his mother, Margaret often seemed keen to transfer the responsibility, particularly paying for it, over to him. In a letter of 1477 she absolved responsibility for her son William making it clear that she did not wish to continue financing her younger son and considered, as head of the family, John should take over this responsibility:

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 41 – 42 (1458).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 338 – 39 (3 April 1469).

<sup>109</sup> BL Add. MS 27999 f. 84 (12 Sept 1629).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., f. 92 (23 October 1629).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., ff. 140, 147, 149, 154 (1631).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., f. 106 (c. 1629).

I wulde ye xulde purvey for hys fyndyng, for as I told yow þe laste tyme þat ye ware at home I wulde no lenger fynde hym at my cost and charge. Hys boord and hys scole hyer ys owyng sythyn Seynt Thomas day a-fore Cristmesse, and he hathe greet nede of gownys and odyr gere þat whare necessary for hym to haue in haste. I wulde ȝe xulde remembyrt and purvey þere-fore; as for me, I wul nat.<sup>113</sup>

She must have begun this process of transferring responsibility to John in the years immediately following his father's death, as there is a letter between John II and his brother, John III, revealing his resentment at having to provide financially for his sister and take responsibility for her education:

as for my suster Annys comyng hyddr, I shall puruey for hure wyth myn aunt iff I can, iff my moodre will depart wyth c s. be yere, wher-off I am not serteyn [...] Neuerthelesse I woll purueye for hyre thoghe I sholde paye the c s. by yeer my-selffe, and yit she is nott my dowtre.<sup>114</sup>

In this letter, it was less the finding a placement for his sister that bothered him and more the financial cost of Anne who was 'nott my dowtre'.

This shows confusion in the role of father and brother, and that brothers who were required to take a parental role after the death of their father, could feel that this was not a suitable role for them. Dorothy Thynne appealed to her seemingly disinterested brother about her marriage match, hoping that, 'your Brotherly love will herein and alwayes shewe your desire of my best advauncement.'<sup>115</sup> It was expected that eldest brothers would take on this parental concern of ensuring their siblings were provided for as adults by their education and marriages. John Paston II and III were only two years apart in age and regularly corresponded about family matters. Indeed, the older-younger brother relationship could be a reciprocal one as younger siblings had a shared interest in ensuring the family's success, regardless of whether the family head was their parent or sibling.<sup>116</sup> John Paston III acted as an alternative source of support for John II, especially during times of disagreement with their mother. This role was not necessarily gendered as sisters also worked to support their brothers. In the Willoughby family in the 1560s, brother and sister, Francis and Margaret, were put into the care of a relative after their parents' death. When Francis came to be married his sister was extremely opposed to his choice of bride, which resulted in

---

<sup>113</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 379 – 80 (11 August 1477).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., pp. 451 – 52 (8 November 1472).

<sup>115</sup> Long. TH/VOL/VIII f. 25 (12 October 1606).

<sup>116</sup> Pollock, 'Younger Sons in Tudor and Stuart England', *History Today*, vol. 39, no. 6 (1989), p. 24.

angry letters from Francis.<sup>117</sup> When editing these letters in the eighteenth century, Cassandra Willoughby commented:

being the elder sibling, [Margaret] felt she had a power of governing over him and could not leave off the custom after their childhood when he was grown up, and continued to expect him to advise with her in all his affairs.

This shows that elder sisters could also feel they had a right to advise younger brothers, especially over important decisions like their marriages.<sup>118</sup> Cassandra herself had a younger brother who she supported, but presumably did not exert what she thought to be excessive control over him.

The Paston brothers appeared to accept responsibility for their younger siblings on many occasions but took issue with their financial provision. Margaret Paston sent reminders to her eldest son to provide smaller items for his younger siblings, such as items of clothing.<sup>119</sup> These letters are reminiscent of similar letters she sent to John's father reminding him several times to complete requests such as this for his young children. She transferred requests such as these directly from her husband to son. Mothers were not always required to intervene, and there are several examples of brothers writing directly to their elder brother to request money. William Paston II wrote long formal letters to his brother, John I, on occasions when he needed money.<sup>120</sup> The Paston siblings seem to have been close and often a source of support for each other but there was still an acknowledgment that the eldest should be kept happy as he had authority over them. Edmond Paston II wrote to his brother, John III, with the worry that their elder brother would be displeased with him for not sending over money he was owed.<sup>121</sup> This type of deference can also be seen from siblings in the early seventeenth century. Henry Oxenden's sister Elizabeth wrote to thank him for some money he had sent her, apologising profusely that she had not written to him as, 'it is not for want of true love unto you'.<sup>122</sup> Indeed her handwriting, although clear, is unaccomplished for the period. However it is notable that Elizabeth chose to write in her own hand as this was a convention intended to emphasise her gratitude. Nevertheless, O'Day notes that although women may have written in a subordinate manner, this does not indicate that they

---

<sup>117</sup> HMC Middleton, p. 525.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 525; Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 52.

<sup>119</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 336 – 39 (12 March 1469), pp. 536 – 37 (c. October 1467).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 149 – 150 (16 June 1452).

<sup>121</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 633 – 35 (18 November 1471).

<sup>122</sup> BL Add. MS 27999, f. 106 (c. 1629).



felt this way.<sup>123</sup> They may merely have been aware that this type of language and behaviour would be more likely to induce their brothers to grant the request and fulfil their obligations to them. Women could also inhabit various roles within the family and, as with petitions to government officials discussed above, use formal methods of communication to access assistance within patriarchal structures.

Mothers may have been exempt from this concern to pacify and flatter their eldest son. Although technically subordinate to him, as patriarchal society stated that the eldest male held the authority in a family, mothers had dominant status as parents over their child, albeit adult child. This is shown in a letter by Margaret Paston to her second son John III, in which she discussed John II's spending and behaviour:

He wrythetyth to em also þat he hath spend thys terme xl li. Yt is a gret thyng. Me thynkkyth be good dyscresyon there mythe myche there-of a ben sparyd. Ȝowr fadyre, God blysse hys sowle, hath not spend halfe þe mony vp-on them in so lytel tyme, and hath do ryth well. At þe reuerens of God, avyse hym ȝet to be ware of hys expencys.<sup>124</sup>

This letter was intended to be relayed to him and was written in the hand of their younger brother Edmond, so it was not a secret that Margaret was employing some harsh words and discipline against her adult son's spending and she continued to assert parental authority over him, even though he was aged almost thirty. In this way, Margaret Paston occupied a similar role to that of Anne Bacon in the 1590s with her two adult sons. Katy Mair suggests that Anne actively used her position as widow to increase her authority over her children, emphasising that the loss of their father had altered her parental status.<sup>125</sup> Although Margaret did not sign letters to her sons as 'widow', she took the opportunity of her status as sole parent and experienced family matriarch to chastise them and exert her domestic authority. Like Anthony Bacon, her sons never directly confronted her, although their occasional resistance to her involvement can be inferred in their letters to one another. The elder Paston sons did display a genuine concern for their younger siblings' welfare and probably did not always need their mother's prompting. In a letter to his younger brother, John II expressed a concern that his mother should move their 'yonge brytheryn' away from areas of plague. He used emotive language to show his concern for his family, writing, 'for Goddysake sake, late my moodre take heede to

---

<sup>123</sup> Rosemary O'Day, 'Tudor and Stuart Women: Their Family Lives Through Their Letters', in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. Daybell, p. 131.

<sup>124</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 358 – 60 (29 November 1471).

<sup>125</sup> Mair, 'Material Lies', p. 66.

my yonge brytheryn, that they be nat in noon place wher that syckenesse is regnyng'.<sup>126</sup> After John II's death, John III took over responsibility for their youngest brother William who developed a mental illness in 1503 – 4.<sup>127</sup> They did not seem unwilling to take on a parental role for younger siblings but the overlap of role as son, sibling and father caused tension in their relationship with their mothers.

Domestic authority was renegotiated after the death of a father. This could be problematic for mothers and sons, particularly over large matters such as inheritance where mothers like Joan Thynne might need to take on the cause of younger siblings. Other factors were also important in the negotiation of this authority for example the age of the mother and son. Even if a son was over twenty-one at his father's death, he may still have asked for or needed guidance from his mother who held valuable knowledge of the running of family business. Evidence shows families working in partnerships as well as experiencing conflict. John Paston II and his mother, Margaret, existed in uneasy partnerships with each other, sometimes showing compassion and working together, yet at other times becoming frustrated with the demands made on them or the authority wielded by parent or child against the other. There was certainly a change in domestic authority after the death of a parent and in the parent-child relationship as this crisis point was negotiated.

## Conclusion

Death was a point in the life cycle which had a significant impact on individuals and the organisation of the family in general. Individuals responded with grief to the death of loved ones, and it was expected that children would feel and express grief after the death of a parent. For many children, it was at this point in their lives when they truly became regarded as adults, particularly eldest sons who became heads of their family. This organisation of the patriarchal system through primogeniture was the source of much conflict at this crisis point in family life. If we view 'parent' and 'child' as relational statuses, it is at this point in the life cycle when they changed the most. As family authority moved towards adult children, particularly eldest sons, they gained authority over their mothers and siblings. However, they remained in their status as 'child' and this could cause confusion and tension in the parent-child

---

<sup>126</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, pp. 439 – 41 (15 September 1471).

<sup>127</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 2, p. 486 (26 June 1503 – 4).

relationship. Widowed mothers gained power as independent women and often as the eldest member of their family, but although they had the authority of age and experience, they were, in law, subordinate to their sons. Nevertheless, in cultural terms the idea of obeying one's parents did not disappear as a parent aged, and in their status as 'parent' mothers could still exercise a great deal of authority over their sons. Many worked with their sons, in some ways acting in a partnership similar to the marital one they had shared with their husband. This cultural practice of mothers retaining authority and negotiating power with their eldest sons endured in the aristocracy and gentry classes throughout the long sixteenth century.

Terms such as 'father', 'husband', or 'child' could have more of a functional meaning than in modern usage. Now, the term husband has a very specific meaning but its use by John Paston II that he would act as his mother's husband and bailiff in arranging some family business matters shows that the term could be applied more fluidly in this period. The actions of other individuals also indicate this overlap. The Paston sons often acted as fathers to their siblings, providing them with money and arranging their marriages. And when Thomas Thynne refused to act with fatherly concern over his siblings' financial support, his mother was required to challenge his status as family head by launching petitions on their behalf in opposition to his wishes. This overlap of roles as son, brother, and husband caused confusion and tension within the family as roles were renegotiated in everyday decisions and different stakes were argued in more significant conflicts over inheritance. Age and personality were certainly factors in the handling of this transition point in family life. Some mothers held more authority than others and some sons were more willing to take on the wellbeing of siblings than others. Older sons would also be more capable of running family business matters than younger ones, and were most likely to have already been involved in family business before the death of their fathers. The death of a parent highlighted the confusion inherent in family life where these statuses could overlap or change over the life course. Death was a crisis point which particularly highlighted the overlapping meanings in a family members' responsibilities as relationships shifted and reacted to the change in the structure of the family and where its authority was held.





## **Chapter Four - Remarriage**

Not all marriages in late medieval and early modern England were first marriages. Although divorce was extremely uncommon, the high death rate meant that many adults were widowed and went on to marry again. Those who remarried were indeed starting a new family with their new spouse; however, often one or both partners still had children and kinship ties from their previous marriage and family. In *The Life of Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague*, one of the many aspects of her life that Magdalen was praised for was her care for her step-children. She is described as a 'worthy example' to stepmothers with the example of the care she showed for the health of her infirm stepson 'as if he had been her own child'.<sup>1</sup> *The Life...* is in fact dedicated to Magdalen's stepgrandson and the dedication to him stresses that 'though she were not the natural author of your lordship's life [...] yet she did prove herself a true and tender mother and grandmother.'<sup>2</sup> Her role as stepmother continued throughout her life and she clearly had an influence over more than one generation of her blended family.

This final chapter considers this extended stage of the family life cycle where the family continued, albeit with a different structure, and demonstrates the various effects that parental remarriage could have on a child. The death of a partner and parent did not always signal the end of the family life cycle as a remarriage created an overlap with a new family which incorporated members of the previous families of one or both partners. It also overlapped with each individual life cycle and complicated it as individuals entered and exited the stages of marriage and parenthood more than once.<sup>3</sup> This chapter uses the modern term 'blended family' to refer to this overlap, suggesting that families brought together by marriage merge and find their goals and relationships interwoven. Although it is anachronistic to apply this term to families in the late medieval and early modern periods, this blending of relationships and goals is evident in families in the past. Remarriage in this period meant the incorporation of new relatives, be they step-parents, stepchildren, half-siblings or other types of relation, into family networks, which involved extending obligations and responsibility for wellbeing and success. Therefore the term 'blended' is also an accurate one to describe families in the past. In fact, a blended family was common in this period when family reputation was extremely important, and family extended to these types of relative. Tamara Hareven

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague 1538 – 1608* (1627), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 1 – 2.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 167 notes this, although only for women.

has observed that individual lives in the past were more integrated with familial goals.<sup>4</sup> The changing goals and configurations of families in this period were often related to the marriages and remarriages of family members and the way kinship relationships altered because of them, yet the impact of remarriage on family structure and authority is largely absent from scholarship. David Cressy's work on migration in the seventeenth century does offer some conclusions on the role of kin, describing kin accumulation as 'cumulative' with subsequent marriages expanding the number of people an individual could call on for help.<sup>5</sup> His model of the 'egocentric system' of kin argues that each individual formed the hub of a unique kinship network that could be utilised.<sup>6</sup> The remarriage of a parent created a composite family in which there were many different types of relationships and so different nuances of duty and obligation. For example a remarried mother would have a different relationship to her new husband than the children from her first marriage would. The addition of step- or half-siblings also created new levels of kin interaction. Each individual who was part of this family could, as Cressy suggests, have a unique set of kinship bonds to another member. However, there is much evidence to show that these families made efforts to build relationships and work under one family strategy. To use the concept of 'emotional communities', it can be seen that families at least attempted to harmonise and act within one set of rules and expectations when building and maintaining their bonds.<sup>7</sup> Crisis points arose, as in all families, when individuals transgressed from family expectations and duty and broke the new emotional relationships that they had formed. As this thesis considers the changing nature of the parent-child relationship across the life course, this chapter explores how the significant event of a parental remarriage altered this relationship and how authority within the family was negotiated as its structure reformed.

Few studies have focused solely on stepfamilies, one notable exception being Lisa Wilson's book on stepfamilies in early America. She suggests that, 'Despite or perhaps because of stepfamilies' ubiquitousness, historians have all but ignored the unique experience of such families', either including them in broader narratives of

---

<sup>4</sup> Tamara K. Hareven, 'Recent Research on the History of the Family', in *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History*, ed. Michael Drake (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 269 – 75.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*.

family life or assuming that they were different.<sup>8</sup> The suggestion that stepfamily relations have been included more broadly in work on family history seems to be more accurate. This chapter shows that stepfamilies were seen as and acted as one entity, something reflected in the terminology used to describe themselves. However, the composition of a family was changed by a remarriage and authority negotiated between members. These changing dynamics are an important aspect of family experience and worth considering in their own right. Some work has been conducted into related areas, for example, Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner's edited collection on widowhood has several articles on remarriage.<sup>9</sup> Warner considers the 'problem' of second marriages in sixteenth-century France, arguing that remarriages of both men and women could endanger family stability.<sup>10</sup> Other essays in the collection also consider gendered ideas and expectations of widows and widowers in the period.<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Foyster's chapter on remarriage in England shows that remarriage brought complex family networks together which often needed to be negotiated between the married couple, including forming relationships with their children.<sup>12</sup> Since this collection was published, there has been limited further work on remarriage and its effect on family life. Kimberly Schutte's recent article explores subsequent marriages of Tudor aristocratic women, considering their implications for women's status and agency, and Warner's continued research into the issue has focused on family portraits featuring mothers and stepmothers in early modern Europe.<sup>13</sup> Scholars agree that remarriage in this period was typical, even seen as a social duty to ensure adults fulfilled society's roles as spouses and parents.<sup>14</sup> Margaret Pelling's research has challenged existing ideas that women

---

<sup>8</sup> Lisa Wilson, *A History of Stepfamilies in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), p. 19 – 20.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (eds.), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Lyndan Warner, 'Widows, widowers and the problem of "second marriages" in sixteenth-century France', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Cavallo and Warner, pp. 84 – 107.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Pelling, 'Finding widowers: men without women in English towns before 1700', pp. 37 – 54; and Barbara J. Todd, 'The virtuous widow in Protestant England', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Cavallo and Warner, pp. 66 – 83.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, 'Marrying the experienced widow...', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Cavallo and Warner, pp. 108 – 24.

<sup>13</sup> Kimberly Schutte, 'Marrying Out in the Sixteenth Century: Subsequent Marriages of Aristocratic Women in the Tudor Era', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 38 (2013), pp. 3 – 16; Lyndan Warner, 'Remembering the Mother, Presenting the Stepmother: Portraits of the Early Modern Family in Northern Europe', *Early Modern Women*, vol. 6 (2011), pp. 93 – 125; Warner's on-going research is sure to add further insights into the subject of remarriage, with a particular focus on France and the Low Countries.

<sup>14</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*, p. 233; David G Mullan, 'Parents and Children in Early Modern Scotland', in *Finding the Family in Medieval*



needed to remarry to ensure economic security by showing that men were victims of the inequalities found in the patriarchal system too, and also needed a partner to ensure financial stability.<sup>15</sup> Thus the theme of the remarrying widow has been looked at, particularly the decision itself to remarry. This chapter addresses this gap in the literature looking at how blended families functioned after the remarriage had taken place. By considering personal source material it shows in detail how step-parents, children and siblings related to one another and negotiated this change in their family structure.

Some scholars have considered that the family was affected by a relatively high rate of subsequent marriages. Although Barbara Harris acknowledges the significance of the way women 'accumulated families' over their lives as they and their children married and remarried, there is not a sole section devoted to remarriage in her book on aristocratic women, as there is to first marriage and widowhood as stages in women's lives.<sup>16</sup> Discussion on remarriage as an aspect of aristocratic women's lives does appear in sections about wives and motherhood but does not receive consideration in its own right, or from the child's perspective. Having said that, Harris does acknowledge its significance stating that aristocratic widows who remarried often had very different experiences from their first marriages due to their change in status, and recognising the tension that could be caused in families where parents and children were brought together and conflicts over inheritance and estate distribution could occur.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in Cressy's seminal work on life cycle events, he considers marriage as an important event, especially for women for whom it was 'perhaps, the major defining moment of her life', yet it does not consider that many women in this period married more than once.<sup>18</sup> The history of childhood rarely considers the implication of changes in family structure to the lives of children or the experience of parenting. Margaret King's work on the history of childhood argues that historians need to acknowledge the changing configurations of household that could affect the life of a child.<sup>19</sup> Joanne Bailey considers the change in parent-child

---

and *Early Modern Scotland*, eds. Ewan and Nugent, p. 75; King, 'Concepts of Childhood', p. 374.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Pelling, 'Who most needs to marry? Ageing and inequality among women and men in early modern Norwich', in *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*, eds. Botelho and Thane, p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 242.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 167.

<sup>18</sup> David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 4; Elizabeth Foyster, 'Marrying the experienced widow in early modern England: the male perspective', in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, p. 108 cites that as many as a third of single men in seventeenth-century England married widows.

<sup>19</sup> King, 'Concepts of Childhood', p. 374.

relationships after the death of a parent in the eighteenth century, arguing that children were often at the heart of decisions about remarriage for concerns about the protection of their financial and property rights, but also their emotional relationships with their surviving parent.<sup>20</sup> This chapter draws on the work of these scholars and furthers our understanding by considering the emotional states of both parents and children, and how this relationship could be affected by the blending of families, whether in a supportive or unsupportive context. It adds a life course perspective to this field of study and extends the main theme of this research into parents and their adult children by considering remarriage as a major factor affecting the development of many individuals and their relationships with other family members. Remarriage was commonly experienced and parents and children frequently had to negotiate this potential crisis point in their relationship at some stage in their lives.

This chapter considers questions of experience, authority and emotion surrounding a remarriage. Although economic concerns were a part of adjusting to this change in family life, this approach situates these concerns within the wider framework of emotion and daily life experience. Each individual family had its own experience and there could be many variations of family structure created by remarriage, depending on whether one or both parents had previously been married, or if one or both brought children to their new marriage. For young children, their lives were often significantly altered by the presence of a new step-parent and siblings. Legally, there were major implications as wardships were bought and sold within stepfamilies or widowed mothers took on a legal role supporting their child's inheritance claims and this dimension of wardship sale has not yet been explored in detail.<sup>21</sup> In terms of education, a child's access to schooling and future careers could be enhanced if their new step-parent, usually stepfather, was well-connected at court, or wealthier than their birth parent. This could also be the case for adult children as the marriage of their parent brought them into contact with a new kinship network. In the sixteenth century, the religious confessions parents and step-parents belonged to could also impact a child's future as they allied strongly with Protestant or Catholic families. This chapter considers both the positive effects of these extended networks for children, and the tensions that could arise within them. As the death of a parent could see domestic authority challenged between the remaining parent and their

---

<sup>20</sup> Bailey, *Parenting in England 1760 – 1830*, pp. 238 – 39.

<sup>21</sup> Bell, p. 116 calculates the number of wardships granted to mothers but notes that his data does not include mothers who had remarried as their new names meant they were not picked up in his calculations based on shared surnames.

children, so could this parent's remarriage also cause a crisis in family authority as a new family structure was created. Eldest sons could come into conflict with step-parents over property inheritance and maintenance and over the needs and behaviour of their various siblings, step-siblings and half-siblings.

Leading on from this, this chapter also explores emotional ties within stepfamilies and asks whether stepfamilies saw themselves as one entity, or if the tensions inherent in families which had been re-formed and reconstructed created a hierarchy of emotional relationships. Tadmor's work on kinship terms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has shown that the lack of a separate word used to describe step-relations in these periods is evidence of their incorporation into the family.<sup>22</sup> She acknowledges that an individual's kinship group could enlarge considerably throughout the life course, arguing that the definition of a nuclear family becomes blurred.<sup>23</sup> This is also true for the sixteenth century. It is rare to find the term 'step' used at all when referring to step-relations. Although the term 'stepmother' dates back to Anglo-Saxon English, it was not in widespread use.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, any relations made through marriage, including in-laws, were simply referred to as mother, brother, sister etc. in the way full nuclear relations would be named. Names and surnames might be used to differentiate between siblings and step or half siblings, for example Richard Elyot referred in his will to his son as 'my son Thomas' but to his stepson as 'my son Richard Fettiplace'.<sup>25</sup> Although both were described as 'son', the inclusion of surname clearly identified his stepchild. Tadmor describes the incorporation of various relations created by multiple marriages (step-relations, half-relations, married siblings etc.) leading to a family type neither nuclear nor extended, or alternatively both at once.<sup>26</sup> The evidence presented in this chapter builds on her assertions that the lack of terminology to differentiate step-relations shows how nuclear families were tied together into an extended nuclear network where solidarity, duty and support was expected as part of these bonds.<sup>27</sup> The parent-child relationship was altered by the presence of a new step-parent and all the obligations that came with it, on both sides. The reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship also extended to step-parents and children as obligations and responsibilities were shared. Harris argues that women's own definitions of family were more fluid and

---

<sup>22</sup> Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 137.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137 – 39.

<sup>24</sup> "stepmother, n.". OED Online. May 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/189860?rskey=E5DEA1&result=1> (accessed May 13, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> TNA PROB 11/20/334 (1520).

<sup>26</sup> Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140 – 46.

complex than their husbands' because of the different roles they held as wives and mothers in their subsequent marriages.<sup>28</sup> This chapter continues to explore authority within family roles and consider how they overlapped in families, both for mothers, fathers, and children, and how individuals saw their own roles. It is clear from evidence found in personal source material that emotions did play a part in relationships within blended families, not just practical considerations or financial issues. Their individual and family lives were interconnected, both by family goals of wealth and status but also by the bonds they shared as part of a kin group providing support to other members.

Considering the tensions and conflicting interests caused by remarriage as well as the support families showed to one another, this chapter argues that the parent-child relationship was profoundly altered by the integration of a step-parent and blending of families in their networks as new parents demanded obedience and new siblings entered the familial sphere, however often with different goals and obligations. As both parents and children took on responsibility for others and negotiated their position within the family structure, they also forged new relationships which impacted on their individual lives.

### **The stepfamily: stereotype and reality**

Statistics show that in the late sixteenth century men made up a higher proportion of remarriages, because of the high rate of maternal mortality.<sup>29</sup> Yet it is the stereotype of the wicked stepmother that we are most familiar with; that has come down to us from folk tales and fairy tales of the early modern period and has contributed to their ambivalent reputation.<sup>30</sup> A printed text *The Fryer and the Boy* from 1626 told the story of a family where the stepmother wanted to send her husband's son away. She is described as 'a cruel step-dame full of pride, who is most curst to me' and wished death on the boy by poisoning his food.<sup>31</sup> It was when they did not meet their caring responsibilities that they were represented as wicked and hateful in folklore and conduct literature. This stereotype of the self-serving step-

---

<sup>28</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Schutte, 'Marrying Out in the Sixteenth Century', p. 5; Janet D. Griffith, 'Economy, Family, and Remarriage: Theory of Remarriage and Application to Preindustrial England', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1980), p. 479 – 97.

<sup>30</sup> Heather Dubrow, "The infant of your care": Guardianship in Shakespeare's Richard III and Early Modern England', in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), pp. 147 – 68, considers step-parents in Shakespeare; Bailey, 'The History of Mum and Dad', p. 500, also notes the contemporary stereotype.

<sup>31</sup> *The Fryer and the Boy*, (London, 1626).

parent was often found in both genders as stepmothers and stepfathers were alleged to disadvantage the stepchildren in their care.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the early modern period, aristocratic men increasingly tried to place limits on the financial provision of their widows. They often stated in their wills that wives would have control of jointure lands until they died, unless they remarried, when they would forfeit them.<sup>33</sup> The intention was to make sure widows had ample maintenance, not that they would maintain independent wealth through their jointure lands at the expense of their children.<sup>34</sup> Barbara Hanawalt argues that the English practice of generous dowers and a widow's freedom to choose a new husband undermined the strength of the patriarchy and patrilineal ties, which explains why aristocratic men would try to curtail such freedom.<sup>35</sup> When trying to garner support from Thomas Cromwell in support of her claims against her stepson, Lettice Peniston noted her status as 'desolate widow' and stressed that she intended to remain one for the rest of her life.<sup>36</sup> Presumably she thought this claim more likely to win her the support of a powerful patron as she adhered to the idealised status of the perpetual widow. Later in the sixteenth century, Anne Newdigate drew on similar tropes of the perpetual widow when requesting the wardship of her young son. Larminie describes that one of the 'trump cards' she played was to make clear that she had rejected the possibility of a second marriage, believing that this would be a selfish act and one which would defraud her children.<sup>37</sup> It was still a concern in the early seventeenth century as found in Walter Raleigh's *Instructions to his Sonne and to Posterity* where he advised his son to 'leave thy Wife no more then of necessitie' because, even if their children were provided for, another man would benefit from his estates.<sup>38</sup>

Under these conditions, it might seem difficult to understand why a woman would remarry. There was certainly literature at the time that advised against it either

---

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Collins, "A Kind of Lawful Adultery": English Attitudes to the Remarriage of Widows, 1550 – 1800', in *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, ed. Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> TNA PROB 11/20/183 (1520); Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 166.

<sup>34</sup> Erickson, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Remarriage as an Option for Urban and Rural Widows in Late Medieval England', in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 141 – 64.

<sup>36</sup> TNA SP 1/143 f. 177 (28(?) February 1539).

<sup>37</sup> Vivienne Larminie, 'Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: The Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574 – 1618) in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, ed. Daybell, pp. 101 – 02.

<sup>38</sup> *Sir Walter Raleighs instructions to his sonne and to posterity* (1632), p. 23 – 27.

directly, or through satirical verse.<sup>39</sup> Stephen Collins refers to the ‘almost universal opposition to the remarriage of widows’, which is evident in the writing of intellectuals like Juan Luis Vives.<sup>40</sup> A Spanish writer with the patronage of Katherine of Aragon, it seems likely that his treatment of remarriage would not be supportive. After the death of Henry VIII, his daughter Princess Elizabeth wrote to her half-sister, Princess Mary, expressing her disapproval that their stepmother Katherine Parr was due to remarry.<sup>41</sup> She believed the remarriage would dishonour their father’s name and memory, and it is likely that Mary, as a former student of Vives, daughter of Katherine of Aragon, and devoted Catholic, would have shared this opinion. Although, as a Protestant, the fact that Elizabeth also disapproved of her stepmother’s remarriage demonstrates that this disapproval was cultural and not only based on religious ideology. This disapproval is evident in other texts, often based on the effect of a remarriage on children.<sup>42</sup> Writers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries worried that widows would disinherit children from their first marriage in favour of those from their second, or, conversely, that they would only be marrying to provide for their children and have no affection for their new husband.<sup>43</sup> In his will of 1593, Rowland Hayward warned his wife, the mother of their several young children, against marrying a man ‘that shall not be careful’ with his money.<sup>44</sup> It is possible to infer here that he saw the potential problems in a second marriage that might not benefit his children. Men could also feel anxiety at the prospect of remarriage. Richard Rogers described second marriages as ‘dangerous’ in his diary in 1588 and saw potential problems if his wife died such as care of his children and the fear of losing the friendship of her kin.<sup>45</sup> Friends and kin were also able to see problems in a remarriage. Roger Dennis, a trustee of the will of Honor Lisle’s first husband, Sir John Basset, wrote to her after her remarriage suggesting that he and the other feoffees should handle his affairs for the sake of her children.<sup>46</sup> Edward Whotton wrote to his widowed sister in 1550 advising her not to remarry mainly because, as she was too old to have more children, a man would only be interested

---

<sup>39</sup> Robert Copland, *The seuen sorowes that women haue when theyr husbandes be deade* (London: 1565).

<sup>40</sup> Collins, “A Kind of Lawful Adultery”, in *The Changing Face of Death*, eds. Jupp and Howarth, pp. 34 – 47.

<sup>41</sup> Everett Wood (ed.), *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, p. 193 – 94 (1547).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Collins, “A Kind of Lawful Adultery”, in *The Changing Face of Death*, eds. Jupp and Howarth, p. 39; Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> Long. TH/VOL/LIII f. 69 (1593).

<sup>45</sup> Houlbrooke, *English Family Life*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p. 393 – 95.

in her for financial reasons and then she would find it hard to keep the inheritance meant for her children from him.<sup>47</sup> Thus, remarriage was a concern for a woman's wider family who wanted to preserve the interests of her children, and stop another man exploiting them.

However, remarriage was not unusual. Peter Laslett's work estimates that 25% of marriages in early modern England were remarriages.<sup>48</sup> So the disapproval found in conduct literature was either ignored, or not that influential on most. Other aspects of advice found in conduct literature for families was taken seriously, for example, the advice presented to children encouraging filial obedience, but in this aspect of family life, there was a divergence between advice and individual practice. Warner's survey of family portraits shows an ambivalence towards remarriage where first wives, second wives, and their respective children were all shown together in depictions of blended families.<sup>49</sup> Marriage provided security for most women and children and was seen as the natural state for women. Barbara Todd's work on the stereotype of the remarrying widow argues that women remarried on the basis of three main factors: opportunity, necessity and preference, showing that a widow's agency was a major factor in the decision to remarry. Although this 'agency' could be seen as merely necessity, Schutte supports Todd in her analysis of women remarrying below their social class, showing that, unlike with first marriages, many widows had more freedom to choose a new partner and could marry for love.<sup>50</sup> There is certainly evidence of affection between couples in their subsequent marriages. Despite warnings from some contemporary writers of the difficulty that a man might have in making a widow forget 'the manners and qualities of her first husbände', correspondence between husbands and wives often display close relationships, regardless of whether it was their first marriage, or a subsequent one.<sup>51</sup> And where there was marital discord this seems to be down to the personalities of the individuals, not the fact that they were remarried. Harris's analysis of the chosen burial locations of aristocratic women notes that the relatively high number of women who chose burial with a second, third or fourth husband means they, 'may have felt their greater emotional attachment to that husband' than to a higher ranking husband, or the father of their eldest son.<sup>52</sup> Couples were no less likely to have an

---

<sup>47</sup> HMC Middleton, p. 516.

<sup>48</sup> Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, p. 103.

<sup>49</sup> Warner, 'Remembering the Mother, Presenting the Stepmother'.

<sup>50</sup> Schutte, 'Marrying Out in the Sixteenth Century'.

<sup>51</sup> *The Christian mans closet* (1591), p. 98 – 99.

<sup>52</sup> Barbara Harris, 'The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women and Care of the Dead, 1450 – 1550', *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 48 (2009), p. 328 – 29.

emotionally satisfying marriage if either or both had been married before. But even if not for love, a widow might choose to remarry for legal protection. Anne Clifford lived as a widow for more than six years but chose to remarry 'for the Crossing and disappointing, the envie, malice and sinister practices of my Enemyes' who she believed had tried to rob her of her lands.<sup>53</sup> Men were likely to consider marrying a widow for various reasons including her proven ability to bear children, her personal wealth, or her family connections. For example, Edmond Paston wrote to his younger brother William in c.1480 suggesting a possible marriage match for him with a widow ten years his senior with two children. He thought the match a good prospect because the widow had inherited money from her first husband and her children were provided for.<sup>54</sup> For both men and women, there was usually less involvement from parents over a remarriage compared to their first marriage which often took place in their late teens or early twenties. Many would have lost one or both parents as they grew older but even those with surviving parents were allowed to exercise their own wishes over this decision.<sup>55</sup>

Although much conduct literature argued against remarriage, particularly for women, partly because of the damage this would do to their children's inheritance and financial provision, step-parenting is discussed by some writers. It was so common in this period that it was prudent for many to offer advice. *The Office of Christian Parents* stated right near the beginning of the text that step-parents were 'bound in conscience to performe all Christian pietie in bringing up the fatherlesse or motherlesse' and later stressed that the role of step-parent was an important one to take on.<sup>56</sup> This sentiment can be found in the sixteenth century as well in a published sermon by Henry Smith who asked women to remember to love, tend and cherish their stepchildren 'as their mother did', so then the children would love her 'as much as their father'.<sup>57</sup> He tried to appeal to stepmothers by reminding them that:

---

<sup>53</sup> Clifford (ed.), *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*, p. 91.

<sup>54</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 639 – 40 (January, perhaps after 1480).

<sup>55</sup> Clark 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family...', pp. 132, 151, 206 presents two cases parental involvement in remarriage in the 1530s. Katherine Howard who was apparently forced into a second marriage by her parents c. 1535. This case is unusual and the involvement of parents can be explained by the high political standing of her family who needed to avoid any links to treasonous behaviour that Katherine had displayed as part of her marriage to her first husband, Welsh rebel Rhys ap Griffith. Mary Howard was widowed at the age of 17 so her second marriage likely came under the jurisdiction of her father because of her young age and the short duration of her first marriage. Another member of the Howard family had not been pressured to remarry when widowed at an older age.

<sup>56</sup> *The Office of Christian parents*, (1616), p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> *The Sermons of Mr Henry Smith*, p. 34.



as you treat these children, so another may come after and treat your children; for He which hath taken away the first mother, and sent you, can take away the second mother, and send a third, which shall not be like a stepmother to yours, unless you be like a stepmother to these.<sup>58</sup>

This quote shows the importance of step-parenting in terms of the family life cycle. Although many discouraged the idea of remarriage for widows, Smith understood the benefits of remarriage for children, implying that it was for the benefit of families to have harmonious step-parent/stepchild relationships. Children were also instructed to show obedience to parents, whether they were natural or step-parents.<sup>59</sup> Family set-ups were changed by death and remarriage but if stepmothers were caring and treated their stepchildren as their own, then families would be able to survive these crises. These exhortations to step-parents, particularly stepmothers, that they should treat their children as their own were sentiments echoed by other guardians of children. For example the households the Basset children lived in often wrote to their mother, Honor Lisle, that they loved them like their own children, so in this way step-parents fit into a wider acceptance that children should be cared for by any adult who had a parenting role in their lives; however, step-parents did have a particular responsibility for their stepchildren and were viewed as part of one family.

This chapter consistently uses the term 'step' to refer to family members linked by marriage but not blood, but there was not one simple term used in this period to denote this kind of relationship. The terms used by families to describe each other can be illuminating in terms of what they tell us about the self-definition of families. *The Office of Christian Parents* describes the terms 'stepfather' and 'stepmother' as names by which these 'other kind of parents' were 'commonly called' and, as shown, expected they would care for their children as if they were their own.<sup>60</sup> The term is explained by Smith in his sermons as deriving from the word 'stead', 'for a step-mother doth signify a stead-mother; that is, one mother dieth, and another cometh in her stead', something also agreed by *The Office of Christian Parents* and Robert Cleaver's *A godlie forme of householde gouernment*.<sup>61</sup> In 1478, John Paston III referred to a woman known to him as a 'steppe-modyr' so it seems that the term was known from the late Middle Ages.<sup>62</sup> However, it is extremely rare to find the term

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 34 – 35.

<sup>59</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 146.

<sup>60</sup> *The Office of Christian Parents*, (1616), p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> *The Sermons of Mr Henry Smith*, p. 34, *The Office of Christian parents* (1616), p. 4; Robert Cleaver, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment for the ordering of priuate families, according to the direction of Gods word* (London, 1598), pp. 240 – 44.

<sup>62</sup> Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the fifteenth Century*, vol. 1, p. 612 – 14 (3 February 1478).

'step' used by families in personal correspondence to refer to their parent, child or sibling by marriage. In 1534, John Cheriton wrote to Arthur Lisle about trading matters and added at the end of his letter that he had bought silks for the family, for him and Honor and 'for my ladies your daughters, and for my Lady's daughters.'<sup>63</sup> To differentiate between the children from Arthur and Honor's previous marriages here is unusual. St Clare Byrne states that for the Lisles, 'children and stepchildren were regarded as one family by everybody' with people referring to Arthur's daughters as 'your daughter' in letters to Honor and to Honor's son as 'your son' in letters to Arthur, and all the Basset children referring to Arthur as 'my lord my father'.<sup>64</sup> The children did not differentiate either, with Mary Basset offering greetings in letters to 'my sisters', a group that included her full-blood sisters Philippa and Katherine, as well as her stepsister Frances. Arthur and Honor's stepchildren from their previous marriages continued to address them as father and mother in letters, including Honor's stepdaughter Jane Basset who was likely the same age as her stepmother. The Cheriton letter certainly appears anomalous in this context where letters almost always contained greetings to the children as a whole group, or by name if the writer knew them well enough.<sup>65</sup> This is the same in other families. Margaret Donington, countess of Bath referred to her children from her second and third marriages to her third husband as 'owr children', and George Talbot told his wife Bess that her stepson Gilbert was happy 'to have syche Amothar as you Arre'.<sup>66</sup> Couples may have referred to stepchildren as 'your son' or 'your daughter' in letters to their spouse, for example Francis Hastings referring to his 'wife's son' when his stepson had kept him from leaving the house as they waited for a bone setter to come and fix his dislocated arm, but this can also be found in letters between couples describing their natural children.<sup>67</sup>

Although it acknowledged a different term to refer to step-parents, the evidence from conduct literature also stressed the importance of step-parents caring for their stepchildren like their own. This shows that the lack of distinction made between children, parents and siblings was not unconsidered. Families had a duty to act as

---

<sup>63</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 2, p. 48 (15 February 1534).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 470 – 71 (27 April 1535).

<sup>66</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/48 (c. 1553); ID 068, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Bess of Hardwick, [c. 1570], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=068>

<sup>67</sup> Clare Cross (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Francis Hastings* (Somerset Record Society, vol. 69, 1969), pp. 72 – 3 (26 January 1598/9); This is something commonly found in the Paston correspondence particularly in the letters of John I Paston and Margaret Paston.

a cohesive unit with parents responsible for all the children and children with a duty to obey any parental figures.<sup>68</sup> That they referred to each other by the same terms shows that this was taken seriously by families. Social conventions and ideas about family life led them, at least in address, to treat each family member the same. Even when separated from her fourth husband after years of dispute, Bess of Hardwick referred to his son Henry as 'my sonne Henry Talbott', perhaps in an attempt to gain sympathy for the fact that her husband had sent 'vnkynde' words by him, using one of 'their' children to do this.<sup>69</sup> When Bess married her fourth husband, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, in 1567, their marriage brought together fourteen children, her seven Cavendish children and his seven Talbot children. Not long after their marriage, they cemented family ties further by marrying George's eldest son and heir Gilbert Talbot to his stepsister Mary Cavendish, and Bess's eldest son Henry Cavendish to his stepsister Grace Talbot. This firmly entwined the two families in several different partnerships. Both girls were very young at their marriages, aged eight and twelve, so the marriages were clearly for dynastic reasons. It must have seemed very important to George and Bess to link their families together. In families with a complicated structure like this, it may have been easier to use a simple term 'daughter' or 'sister' instead of having to grapple with the issue of an individual being both your stepdaughter and daughter-in-law, or stepsister and sister-in-law.<sup>70</sup> Or they chose to use the term 'in-law' which could indicate both types of relationship.<sup>71</sup> Honor Lisle's stepdaughter Margery Marres, the daughter of her first husband John Basset from his first marriage, wrote to her about problems she was having with her lands in Devon and signed herself 'your daughter-in-law'.<sup>72</sup> Margery presumably

---

<sup>68</sup> Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* (1609), p. 146 says that children should be obedient to parents whether they are natural or step-parents.

<sup>69</sup> ID 153, Bess of Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury to Francis Walsingham, 2 December 1585, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=153>

<sup>70</sup> ID 068, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Bess of Hardwick, [c. 1570], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=068> shows Edward Talbot refer to Harry Cavendish simply as brother. Letters to Gilbert and Mary usually refer simply to daughter and son.

<sup>71</sup> HMC Bath, p. 102 (c. 1592); pp. 107 – 09 (5 October 1592).

<sup>72</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle letters*, vol. 2, pp. 400 – 01 (12 February 1535); She wrote that many letters had been going backwards and forwards over a piece of land that she believed to be part of her dower lands and asked for Honor's 'gracious help and succour' to help keep 'your lands'. Why she referred to the lands as belonging to Honor is unclear unless she was trying to elicit her support for a piece of land that, although belonging to Margery had come from the estates of Honor's first husband, John Basset; estates that Honor's son was set to inherit. St. Clare Byrne also states that it is unclear what Margery expected Honor to do about her problem, although it seems sensible that she would contact her stepmother

chose to sign this way to stress her family connection to Honor, a woman she hoped would have some legal influence over her affairs. Margery probably used it to stress their family connection in the way that her sister Jane Basset signed letters to Honor, 'your daughter'.<sup>73</sup> As a more regular correspondent of Honor's perhaps Jane felt they had a closer bond which allowed her to use that term. It would also have been used as a sign of deference and respect to gain Honor's favour. Another letter in the Lisle collection shows that the choice to use 'in-law' to refer to relations could indicate displeasure. Arthur Lisle had visited England in 1539; however he did not choose or find time to visit his stepdaughter Katherine Basset who was living with the Countess of Rutland. Katherine wrote to her mother, 'I am very sorry that I saw not my lord, my father-in-law, at his being in England.'<sup>74</sup> Although this is a short and seemingly mild, formal comment, the use of the term 'father-in-law' is interesting as a reader would expect Katherine to have referred to Arthur as simply, 'father'. Perhaps in this case, she was actually aggrieved that he had not visited her and used this more distant term to indicate her displeasure.

Intentions of parents towards their different sets of children were also displayed in wills. Lettice Peniston made bequests to her children from different marriages and did not differentiate on this basis.<sup>75</sup> Bess of Hardwick remembered her stepdaughter Grace in her will, although Grace was also her daughter-in-law so it is possible that she viewed that as the more important link. She did not leave any other stepchildren bequests.<sup>76</sup> Various factors could affect the recognition of stepchildren in a will. Harris notes that women often favoured younger sons and stepsons over heirs in their wills and this fits with the general pattern of mothers providing for children who were more in need of financial help.<sup>77</sup> That women, and men, did include stepchildren who needed support in their wills shows that they acknowledged their responsibilities to them as well as their natural children. Richard Elyot left bequests to the children of his wife's first marriage in his will, although it is apparent which children are his own and which are his step-children from the way he describes them.<sup>78</sup> He names his eldest stepson as his son John Fettiplace and left him a substantial bequest of bedding, wall hangings, pots and pans, cattle and sheep.

---

as a woman of increased status through her remarriage who, along with her husband, had control over the rest of the Basset lands. (p. 401).

<sup>73</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 400 – 01 (12 February 1535).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 681 – 82 (before 19 October 1539).

<sup>75</sup> TNA PROB 11/40/304 (11 June 1558).

<sup>76</sup> TNA PROB 11/111/213 (14 March 1608).

<sup>77</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 168.

<sup>78</sup> TNA PROB 11/20/334 (c. 1520).

However, he added the caveat that if John took anything that was not left to him in the will, then all other bequests would be void. Richard had sons of his own whose maintenance he also wanted to ensure. He also remembered his stepdaughter Eleanor, leaving her money for her wedding, but he made sure to differentiate between her and his other daughters both by using her surname Fettiplace, and the term 'daughter-in-law'. His natural children still received the majority of his estates and goods and his son and daughter were made executors. Men often left their wives as executors and the fact that Richard chose not to might also suggest that he wished his natural children to have ultimate control of his affairs. The confusion inherent in the gulf between official advice that remarriage could be damaging to a family, but the common experience of remarriage for early modern people, shows us that it could be a difficult decision. Before and after the Reformation, it was an aspect of family life that could be problematic and children were central to the decision to remarry. Images of the 'wicked stepmother' and exploitative stepfather were derived from genuine examples and concerns but terminology shows how far families were considered one entity. Perhaps this aspect of early modern family life, that marriage was such a strong tie, led to these concerns and the worry about how children might fare under a new parent.

### **Emotional effects of remarriage on children**

Before considering how remarriage could cause tension between parents and children, largely because of conflicting loyalties and negotiation of authority over family business and inheritance, it is important to note that there is much evidence of affectionate ties between members of stepfamilies in their day-to-day lives. Although there was an understanding of the different relationships between natural parents and children, and step-parents and children, families regarded themselves and were regarded by others as one entity. In doing so, this section adds to the new research area in the history of parenting which is framed by emotions and seeks to understand manifestations of emotion in the family.<sup>79</sup> In the sixteenth century, 'emotion' was not a widely used term and here it is understood in the sense of affection which would have been seen as an appropriate feeling toward a family member.<sup>80</sup> As seen in many examples, the 'natural' affection of mothers and fathers is often referred to.

---

<sup>79</sup> Bailey, 'The History of Mum and Dad', pp. 490 – 91.

<sup>80</sup> Dixon, "'Emotion': The History of a Keyword in Crisis", p. 339.

Honor Lisle corresponded regularly with all of her natural children but also showed care for her stepchildren. Her youngest stepdaughter Bridget had the most ambivalent place in her family. She had been left in the care of a nunnery in Winchester when the Lisles moved to Calais with the plan to be educated there and then remain there as a nun in her adulthood. This career path was only available to girls in England before the Reformation, but was not usually the first choice for an aristocratic girl who would more usually be found a suitable spouse. St. Clare Byrne suggests that she had been ‘conveniently disposed of’ there. However, the fact of her placement was not a sign of neglect. Her young stepbrothers had also been left in Winchester to be educated and a career in the Church was certainly planned for James, but, of all the children, Bridget does appear to have been somewhat neglected compared to the others, for reasons that are unclear. It is possible that her birth was the occasion of her mother (Arthur Lisle’s first wife)’s death, although this does not offer a convincing explanation, as many women died in childbirth in this period, and there is no indication why Arthur Lisle should have particularly taken against his daughter for this reason.<sup>81</sup> Whatever the cause of Bridget’s apparent disfavour, her father was remarkably uncaring about his daughter’s everyday care and future. When she first went into the care of the nunnery Bridget was not provided with the same amount or quality of clothes as the other children. Abbess Elizabeth Shelley wrote to Honor to ‘assure’ her that Bridget ‘lacketh convenient apparel’ describing that she had only one whole gown, one good partlet for her neck and one good coif for her neck, evidently not the amount of clothes one would expect the daughter of an aristocrat to be provided with.<sup>82</sup> At around the same time, a letter concerning James Basset confirmed that ‘as for shirts and hoses and all other gear, a shall lack none.’<sup>83</sup> In the late 1530s, the nunnery became threatened by the dissolution of religious houses. Bridget was removed by a family friend who wrote to Arthur that he was looking after her, adding that she had outgrown most of her clothes and ‘is very spare and hath need of cherishing.’<sup>84</sup> When Honor went over to England in 1538, she brought Bridget back to Calais against her husband’s wishes. He wrote that, ‘there is no man living would gladlier have by [his] wife’s company than I would have yours [...] I am sorry that you will bring my daughter Bridget with

---

<sup>81</sup> There is no evidence to support any other speculation, for example, about whether Bridget had any physical or mental disability which might explain her treatment.

<sup>82</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3 p. 93 (26 February 1535). This is in direct contrast to the list of items John Basset was bought – see chapter one.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 107 – 08 (4 November 1533).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5 p. 219 – 20 (c. 14 – 16 September 1538).

you.<sup>85</sup> Here, Honor's care for her stepdaughter appeared to exceed Bridget's own father's, and it might be inferred that her comparative neglect of Bridget in England might have been due to her husband's instructions. When Honor was without him in England she took the decision to bring Bridget home.

There are many other examples of stepmothers caring for their stepchildren. Jane Couchman presents the case study of French Huguenot aristocrat Louise de Coligny, grandmother of William of Orange, who took responsibility for her four stepdaughters and supported them financially and emotionally, continuing to have relationships with their children in her old age.<sup>86</sup> During her second marriage in the 1540s, Bess of Hardwick lived with her two step-daughters and bought them expensive gifts and clothes.<sup>87</sup> Honor Lisle's care for stepchildren also extended to her step-niece, the daughter of her sister's first husband, who wrote to her for help in 1534.<sup>88</sup> Margaret Donington, on her third marriage to John Bouchier initially appeared to take dismissive action against her stepchildren, listing as part of her marriage demands that his daughters were not to live with them.<sup>89</sup> She already had seven daughters and two sons from her previous two marriages and went on to have two more daughters with Bouchier, so perhaps this was her way of protecting their interests. Her dynastic preoccupation can be inferred from her tomb monument which, although a joint grave with her third husband, contains monuments to her previous husbands and details of who they were married to and the children they had.<sup>90</sup> She did take on the interests of her two stepsons, John and George Bouchier but appears to have rejected her role as stepmother to their sisters. Although it was common for blended families to have many children, perhaps Margaret found the inclusion of Bouchier's daughters too much for one household. As it was common at this time for children to live in other households, if Bouchier's daughters had been older, it might have been suitable for them to live away from the household anyway. In one letter, Bouchier seems to have been looking after his daughters and stepdaughters while Margaret was away, and she made clear her care for them telling him to keep them there away from sickness in the town, and that if he did not

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, p. 313 (28 November 1538).

<sup>86</sup> Jane Couchman, "Our little darlings": Huguenot Children and Child-rearing in the Letters of Louise de Coligny', in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, eds. Miller and Yavneh, pp. 101 – 16.

<sup>87</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynasty* (London: Peter Owen, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>88</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 2, p. 163 – 71 (1534).

<sup>89</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/3/75 (c. 1548).

<sup>90</sup> John Gage, *The History and Antiquities of Hengrave in Suffolk* (London: 1822), p. 65.

carry out her orders to care for all the children then she would quickly return home.<sup>91</sup> Although slightly mistrusted, John Bouchier was assigned with the care of his children and stepchildren. An earlier example from the Stonor letters in 1476 shows William Stonor caring for his stepdaughter. His wife Elizabeth wrote to him asking to send her daughter to her when the child was ill and she later thanked him for looking after them, so he was also sometimes left with care of the family, including his stepchildren.<sup>92</sup> There are few letters from Arthur Lisle about his children, but he was left in charge of the children in Calais on Honor's trip to England in 1538. One letter from this period when he was separated from Honor has a touching reference to his daughter Frances. In December 1538 his daughter Frances was pregnant with her first child, her husband being her stepbrother, John Basset. Arthur wrote that 'Frances at your coming home will make feel one piece of mine, and another piece of yours.'<sup>93</sup> This reference to the quickening of Frances's pregnancy shows the excitement felt by this symbol of the union of both of their families. This baby would be one piece of her family and one piece of his. Arthur and Honor had struggled to have a child of their own, so this pregnancy and the relationship between their children must have had special significance for them.<sup>94</sup>

Care for the health of family members has already been shown to be a key aspect of parental concern and features frequently in letters. This concern also extended to stepchildren. During the pregnancy of his stepdaughter Elizabeth née Cavendish, George Talbot wrote to his wife Bess that he advised Elizabeth to eat fruit for her health 'which she loves well'.<sup>95</sup> That he both knew she enjoyed eating fruit and felt in a position to advise her own mother to tell her to eat it suggests a close relationship with his stepdaughter and certainly a knowledge and an interest in her wellbeing. George Talbot also took an interest in the relationships between his stepchildren. During the pregnancy of his stepdaughter Mary, who was also his daughter-in-law, he wrote to Bess explaining that he had seen Mary's sister Elizabeth who wished to be with her sister:

I told my Lady Lennox, she asking me of her going to Chatsworth, I told her she should stay awhile [...] where it seemed to grieve her she should not

---

<sup>91</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/35 (c. 1550?).

<sup>92</sup> Carpenter (ed.), *Stonor Letters and Papers*, p. 168 (1476).

<sup>93</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 5 p. 326 (10 December 1538).

<sup>94</sup> Janelle Day Jenstad, 'Lying-in Like a Countess: The Lisle Letters, the Cecil Family, and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2004), pp. 376 – 383.

<sup>95</sup> ID 076, George Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [c. 1575?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=076>



come to the bringing to bed of her sister which I infer you do her wrong therein, for it were not amiss she should be with her now.<sup>96</sup>

Here he intervened and told Bess he thought she was doing wrong by not taking into account the feelings of her daughters and Elizabeth's wish to support her sister in pregnancy. Bess had comparable concerns about her stepchildren's health and wellbeing and once wrote to her husband about her stepson Gilbert's health that 'my son Gilbert hath been very ill in his head ever since he came from Sheffield, I think it is his old disease. He is now I thank God somewhat better'.<sup>97</sup> Again her concern is obvious here and also her knowledge about the previous health of her stepson. During an illness of her stepdaughter Katherine in 1575, Bess was kept in touch with regular news from their other stepchildren about Katherine's progress, with Anne and Gilbert Talbot writing specifically to her about it.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Honor Lisle was informed of the health of her stepdaughter Elizabeth at the same time as news of her natural daughters Anne and Katherine.<sup>99</sup>

Close sibling relationships are evident in the Lisle family. Stepsisters Frances and Philippa spent time together living in Calais and Frances took it upon herself to write to her stepmother Honor to inform her of Katherine's health, and her own, when they were unwell. The inference that Honor cared equally about her daughter and stepdaughter's health and that Frances knew this shows their close bonds as well as reinforcing the observation that healthcare in the family was usually ascribed to mothers.<sup>100</sup> Frances especially seemed to form close bonds with her Basset stepsisters who she lived with in Calais. When Mary Basset was accused of contracting a secret marriage in 1540, her sister Philippa described Frances as the sister whom Mary 'loved best' of them all and if anyone knew any of her secrets then

---

<sup>96</sup> ID 078, George Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 21 June 1580, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=078>

<sup>97</sup> ID 182, Bess of Hardwick to George Talbot, [1577], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=182>

<sup>98</sup> ID 092, Anne Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 8 May [1575], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=092> ; ID 081, Gilbert Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 14 May 1575, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=081> ; ID 093, Anne Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 29 May [1575], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=093>

<sup>99</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 95 –96 (7 April 1538).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 294 – 95 (19 November 1538); pp. 314 – 15 (29 November 1538).

it would be her.<sup>101</sup> When living with Madame De Riou in France, Mary would write letters to Philippa but always passed greetings onto Frances and sometimes included small gifts.<sup>102</sup> James Basset also included Frances in his demands that his siblings in Calais reply to his letters.<sup>103</sup> In the Bouchier family, Susan Bouchier also asked for news 'from time to time' from her half- and step-siblings, as did Henry Bouchier who generically referred to 'all the rest of my brothers and sisters'.<sup>104</sup> The bonds of these children from Margaret Donington's three marriages endured after her death in 1562. Thomas Kitson, her eldest son from her first marriage, wrote to his brother Henry Long, from her second marriage to apologise for lack of contact, stressing that he did want to break the 'bond of brotherly love'.<sup>105</sup> Thomas Kitson also kept in contact with his sisters Margaret Long and Susan Bouchier.<sup>106</sup> As his mother's eldest son, he may have taken on responsibility for them, although Margaret and Susan both had elder full-blood brothers. In this situation these women had several male heads of household they could appeal to for support. The blending of families caused by their parents' multiple marriages gave them a wide network of contacts and male patrons bound by familial obligation. Rosenthal notes that this behaviour is 'a welcome counterweight to the theme of rivalry and competition that we so often find after the death of the patriarch or matriarch' and it is true that some of the siblings discussed here appear to have maintained friendships into adulthood more amicably than some full-blood siblings.<sup>107</sup>

Letters between stepfamilies in this period show us that families had a genuine concern for each other, beyond the more detached issue of family reputation through which they all affected each other. The wellbeing and health of all children was important to parents and the instructions found in didactic literature that step-parents should act as if they were their stepchildren's natural parents seems to have been accepted by most families. Bonds between step-parents, stepchildren and stepsiblings could be close and supportive and often endured throughout life. That families rarely used terminology to set apart step relations is indicative of this ideal in family life and the links that were created by marriage. When marrying a widow or widower with children, the new partner's responsibilities to those children were taken

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., vol. 6, p. 145.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 164 – 65 (13 March 1536).

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, p. 504 (13 April 1538).

<sup>104</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/65 (17 March 1556), 88/1/118 (no date).

<sup>105</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/2/4 (21 January 1567).

<sup>106</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/2/8; 88/2/10; 88/2/11 (no dates).

<sup>107</sup> Joel T. Rosenthal, 'Fifteenth-Century Widows and Widowhood: Bereavement, Reintegration, and Life Choices', in *Wife and Widow*, ed. Sheridan Walker, p. 41.

seriously and upheld by the majority of parents who worked together to provide for all their children.

### **Unity and tension in blended family networks**

Considering the extent to which stepchildren were incorporated into the networks of their step-parents shows us how far stepfamilies acted as one family, and times of tension within these networks show us how authority was negotiated between new family members. Members of blended families in this period often utilised the layers of networks at their disposal from their different marriages and connections to support their own causes or build networks to provide information and support. Networks between blended families could be particularly useful. In a period where family connections were an important method of advancement and social mobility, the wider one could cast a network of kin, the more possibilities for benefits to a person and their family. These networks were, indeed, one compelling reason to remarry in this period. However, these complicated ties and networks between parents and children could also be at risk of tension and disagreements, particularly into children's adulthoods when they had their own concerns and goals. Remarriage could widen the network of those who cared for a child's interests; however, tension often emerged in this area. These layers of connections could also become complicated as parents and children faced conflicting loyalties within their various linked family groupings. The relationship between parents and children could become complicated by new responsibilities and obligations, especially in families where overlapping connections had been made, for example the marriages of stepchildren. The negotiation of these obligations shows us how different family roles were viewed and how family members organised their own responsibilities. Tension could arise within internal family networks and wider networks of acquaintances, friends, and patrons.

When considering the impact of networks and patronage on aristocratic women, Harris argues that women's natal kin were the most important members of their extended kin and formed the basis of this network, along with their marital family.<sup>108</sup> However, when considering women who married more than once, it can be seen that women maintained links with all of their marital families, although this was dependent on individual factors, and often, which members of these networks were useful to them. In terms of natal networks, Harris goes on to argue that the outer limit of women's networks were usually their sibling's children and notes that it is

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

striking how narrow many women's networks were and how far they were defined by the linear terms of husband and children by which aristocratic families were delineated.<sup>109</sup> But where do step relations fit into these categories? They were part of a woman's marital kin network but have characteristics of a horizontal network as they incorporated children and stepchildren of previous spouses, and their partners. A woman who used her wide networks to great effect was Bess of Hardwick. Daybell has analysed her means of using these networks, arguing persuasively for a reappraisal of gendered terms of 'gossip' and 'intelligence' based on the comprehensive network of relaying news that she had in place.<sup>110</sup> He notes that she relied on letters from immediate family and kin for much of her news, particularly at court where her female correspondents were all relatives by blood or marriage.<sup>111</sup> Some of the relationships with these women had been created by remarriages. Her half-sister, Elizabeth Wingfield, provided her with extensive news from the court, including messages from the Queen about gifts and requests Bess had sent to her, and, later, news about the care of her granddaughter Arbella.<sup>112</sup> Elizabeth was the daughter of Bess's mother from her second marriage and Bess used their blood connection for her benefit at court, although Elizabeth did not address Bess as her sister, but 'my lady', to mark her higher status. Bess also used her connections with her stepchildren to help her business at court. Her eldest stepson and son-in-law, Gilbert Talbot, reported in a letter of 1578 about his dealings with the Earl of Leicester and the advice he had given about Bess's daughter Elizabeth's suit.<sup>113</sup> It was also in Gilbert's interest to champion the cause of his stepsister at court. As she was the mother of Arbella Stuart who had a connection to the English and Scottish thrones, it seemed a sensible alliance to foster within the family. Bess received members of her family through remarriage into her home at various points

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 191 – 92.

<sup>110</sup> James Daybell, "Suche newes as on the Quenes hye ways we have met": the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (c.1537 – 1608), in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England*, ed. Daybell, pp. 114 – 31.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>112</sup> ID 096, Elizabeth Wingfield to Bess of Hardwick, 21 October [1567], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=096> ; ID 097, Elizabeth Wingfield to Bess of Hardwick, 2 January [1576?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=097> ; ID 098, Elizabeth Wingfield to Bess of Hardwick, 8 December [c. 1585], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=098>

<sup>113</sup> ID 083, Gilbert Talbot to Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, [30 June 1578?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=083>

throughout her life.<sup>114</sup> A letter concerning her half-sister Margaret's visit c. 1565 is noteworthy because it shows Bess's mother Elizabeth Leake using her networks to benefit her children from both marriages.<sup>115</sup> She began by thanking Bess for her kindness to her daughter Margaret, but then went on to ask for money for her son James Hardwick, Bess's full-blood brother, the eldest son of her father. James was planning to buy some land in partnership with one Francis Leake and she asked for Bess's aid in helping him get the money together.<sup>116</sup> So this letter displays several layers of networks working together. Elizabeth Leake was playing an intercessory role between her children from her first marriage, appealing to Bess as the wealthiest and most influential sibling, at this time during her third marriage to William St. Loe. Leake was Elizabeth's maiden name so the Francis Leake who was in partnership with her son was presumably a relative or acquaintance linked with her natal family. There is also the layer of thanks to Bess for her care of Margery, her daughter from her second marriage. These layers of family networks and responsibilities were ones that women like Elizabeth and Bess had to deal with on a daily basis and they were often adept at arranging their own benefits.

Bess also remained in contact with kin from her earlier marriages, in one letter taking in the niece of Richard Cavendish, an acquaintance from her second marriage.<sup>117</sup> In 1591 she used her influence with her stepson and son-in-law Gilbert, the earl of Shrewsbury, by asking her daughter, his wife, to bring the murderer of her 'cousin Leake', presumably a relative of her mother's natal family, to 'due judgement'.<sup>118</sup> Her stepchildren also used their influence with her to appeal to their father on occasion. Katherine Herbert, her husband George's eldest daughter, wrote to her asking her to persuade George to allow her sister Mary to accompany her on a summer trip to

---

<sup>114</sup> ID 057, Roger Manners, fifth earl of Rutland to Bess of Hardwick, 13 October 1606, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=057>

<sup>115</sup> ID 040, Elizabeth Leake to Bess of Hardwick, [c. 1565], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=040>

<sup>116</sup> ID 040, Elizabeth Leake to Bess of Hardwick, [c. 1565], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=040>

<sup>117</sup> ID 012, Richard Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick, 12 July 1570, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=012>

<sup>118</sup> ID 233, Bess of Hardwick to Mary Talbot, 18 February [1590/?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=233>

Wales.<sup>119</sup> She appealed to Bess to further her request both to her father George, and Mary's husband George Savile. Savile is reported as referring his consent to his father-in-law, giving another example of a father retaining decision-making powers over his adult, married daughters. The relationship between the Savilles, Talbots, Cavendishes and Mannors, four families linked by second marriages, continued into the 1590s when members of each family were involved in an arbitration claim over Savile lands. Gilbert Talbot wrote informing his stepbrother, Charles Cavendish, and uncle, John Mannors, that they were to represent George and Edward Savile in Doncaster on 29<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>120</sup> Around the same time another arrangement of family members was dealing with legal matters. Gilbert Talbot was represented in a case by his stepbrother, Charles Cavendish, and cousin, John Talbot; his brother, Henry Talbot, was represented by their uncle, John Mannors.<sup>121</sup> These examples from Bess of Hardwick's extended family show not only how she used her family networks, but also how those around her used theirs and how these layers of network could overlap.

Individual interests and goals could lead to conflict in these wide, overlapping networks. Financial matters were one area that could cause tension within stepfamilies. Margaret Donington quarrelled with her stepson John Bouchier, the only son and heir of her third husband, and the husband of her daughter Frances, during his father's lifetime. The source of Margaret's discontent was her stepson's spending - something he had apparently learnt from his father. There are several surviving letters showing Margaret advising her husband about his finances and stating that she hoped he would curb his spending.<sup>122</sup> She offered both advice and instruction and reminded him that he had two households to maintain.<sup>123</sup> In one letter to her husband she mentioned her concern over both his and his son's spending. She stated that she could not borrow any more money from friends as she was already a burden, and mentioned that her stepson's spending was also out of hand specifying that he had too many servants and his debts were great.<sup>124</sup> A later letter

---

<sup>119</sup> ID 196, Katherine Herbert, countess of Pembroke to Bess of Hardwick, 23 March 1574/5, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=196>

<sup>120</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 288 (23 February 1590/1).

<sup>121</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 302 (29 September 1592).

<sup>122</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/22; 88/1/23; 88/1/37; 88/1/54 (no dates – c. 1550s).

<sup>123</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/23 (no date).

<sup>124</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS, 88/1/37 (no date).

from a family acquaintance reported on John's spending and acknowledged that Margaret was trying to protect her daughter Frances.<sup>125</sup>

In this case, Margaret's role as wife, mother, and stepmother brought her into conflict with her family. She simultaneously tried to protect her own finances and those of her daughter which were linked by primogeniture and the fact that her and her husband's finances would directly impact on John and Frances as heirs. Her efforts to protect the family's money brought her into direct conflict with her husband and stepson and shows us the complex networks of concern and obligations remarriage could create within families. Even when these ties of remarriage and the marriage of stepsiblings had been chosen for reasons of dynasty and sharing of resources and networks, they could also cause complications. Bess of Hardwick's stepdaughter Grace faced confusion in her roles within her complicated stepfamily. In 1604, her brother, Edward Talbot, wrote to their stepmother regarding the large debts of her son, Henry Cavendish, who was stepson and brother-in-law to Edward, as he was married to Grace. The letter included words spoken by Bess's stepdaughter and daughter-in-law, Grace, about the situation. She had apparently said to a servant:

Assure my brother I am and euer wilbe, as sorry to doe any thing that may be eyther hurtfull to him, or the house wherof I came; as any sister or woman in the world, except great and extreame necessity doth inforce me thervnto, which nowe god knowes is much, and we are hardly delt with, both by my ould Lady and my Lord.<sup>126</sup>

Grace's choice of words is illuminating about her status within the family network. Although she, 'as any sister or woman', did not want to cause harm to her natal family, her circumstances forced her to act independently. She also claimed to be 'hardly delt with' by her father and stepmother who had refused to pay off the couple's debts. Edward's intervention to inform his stepmother of the situation shows how a family network could have complicated loyalties and responsibilities for one another. In this case, the family were tied together by blood, marriage and remarriage and the combination of roles, for example Bess as mother, stepmother, and mother-in-law, could create confusion over how to deal with family members deviating from acceptable behaviour.

---

<sup>125</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS, 88/1/120 (no date).

<sup>126</sup> ID 063, Edward Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, 12 May 1604, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=063>



The correspondence of Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot also provides a noteworthy case study of the effect on a family blended by remarriage when this remarriage broke down. Bess and her husband seem to have had problems in their marriage from the late 1570s, permanently separating around 1585. She appealed to him as his wife, and with her daughter being wife to his eldest son, that she was still loyal to him, emphasising the multiple connections their families had made and that the reason for this was to create ties of duty.<sup>127</sup> Her concerns about a potential separation from her husband were often made in terms of the effect on her children. Bess and George brought their responsibilities and each other's failings as parents into the discussion of their marital problems and their children became personally involved in their parents' disagreements and arguments. Earlier on in their period of conflict, before their permanent separation, Bess's stepson and son-in-law, Gilbert Talbot, wrote Bess long, detailed letters about conversations he had had with his father about her, acting as an intermediary between his parents. He wrote word-for-word accounts of these conversations including insults like, 'I was forced to tell her, she scolded like one that came from the bank'.<sup>128</sup> At the beginning of this letter he had apologised for his blunt writing but it seems he assumed she would want to hear a true account of his father's words. He also reported that his father had asked him to judge for himself whether he had had cause to say these words about her, suggesting that George also recognised Gilbert's conflicted position between the two.<sup>129</sup> As the disagreements between Bess and George escalated, Gilbert reported that George, 'told me that the cause he would not have me carry my wife to London was for that he thought your Ladyship would go up to London and then would my wife join with you in exclaiming against him'.<sup>130</sup> This quote shows the difficulties that could be faced by children when tensions arose between their parents. Gilbert's and his wife's loyalty was to both parents and although Gilbert appears close to his father, Bess was still both his stepmother and mother-in-law. That his father was discouraging his wife from seeing her own mother was a difficult situation to find himself in. Here we can see that as parents were responsible for the wellbeing of

---

<sup>127</sup> HMC Bath, p. 45 (26 August c. 1583).

<sup>128</sup> ID 084, Gilbert Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [July 1577?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=084>

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> ID 086, Gilbert Talbot and Mary Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [19 September 1583?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=086>



their children and stepchildren, children were responsible for the wellbeing of their parents and step-parents.

As eldest son and heir to his father, Gilbert may have felt that he needed to mediate the situation his family had found themselves in. He passed messages between his parents but was accused by his father of bias towards his stepmother after choosing to stay at Chatsworth with her.<sup>131</sup> Around a year later he wrote that the problem continued and his father, 'may forgyve it, but forget it he never can duringe his lyffe.'<sup>132</sup> The dispute between Gilbert and George in the 1580s showed us in chapter one how far children could continue to rely on their parents for financial support. George's harsh response to his son's requests for financial assistance were largely due to the crisis situation the family were dealing with. Although George wrote that he expected Bess to assist her stepson, and that 'the care and difference betwyxte a naturall father and step-moother will the appere' if she did not, he also accused Gilbert of allowing his stepmother too much control over his finances.<sup>133</sup> He accused Bess of hiding her income and lying about how much she and her sons made per year.<sup>134</sup> Gilbert's actions in maintaining correspondence with Bess had angered his father, and Gilbert eventually tried to remove himself from the situation.<sup>135</sup> By June 1586 Roger Manners reported to his brother that he had 'contrary to the advice of all his friends hydeth himself from my lord his father and is absent from the court.'<sup>136</sup> Gilbert's attempts at mediating the family crisis proved extremely difficult as he juggled the roles of son, stepson, husband, and landowner.

Other Cavendish and Talbot children were also involved in these disputes, particularly Bess's sons who stood to lose the most from the separation of their parents and the control their stepfather could exert over their property and livelihood, which he was threatening to take. Capp argues that conflicting loyalties or commitments in families of the middling sort could pose a potential threat to male authority, especially over the position of stepchildren.<sup>137</sup> This is also evident in the aristocracy and gentry as stepsons like the Cavendish brothers attempted to assert control over their mother's lands against their stepfather. Bess's eldest son, Henry

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> BL Add. MS 34079 ff. 17 – 18 (8 July 1584).

<sup>133</sup> HMC Bath pp. 57 – 58 (17 September 1585); pp. 58 – 59 (24 September 1585).

<sup>134</sup> HMC Bath, pp. 58 – 59 (24 September 1585).

<sup>135</sup> ID 086, Gilbert Talbot and Mary Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [19 September 1583?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=086>

<sup>136</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 195 (17 June 1586).

<sup>137</sup> Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 80.

Cavendish, appeared to have thrown his support behind his stepfather who, while criticising his own eldest son Gilbert, commended his stepson for 'maintaining his honor' with his behaviour over the situation. Studies of male honour in this period often focus on gendered differentiations, and in this case honour referred to the upholding of male authority within the family as Henry supported the family head, his stepfather and father-in-law.<sup>138</sup> Bess accused George of having 'wone my sonne hary cauendysh to deale most vnnaturally with me'.<sup>139</sup> Perhaps as he had already inherited his father's estates, Henry was not as endangered by losing his livelihood as his younger brothers, or perhaps his relationship with his mother was not as strong and he preferred to ally himself with his wealthy and influential stepfather, who he certainly asked for financial assistance on at least one occasion.<sup>140</sup> Henry was also married to his stepsister, George's daughter Grace Talbot, so like Gilbert and Mary he might have found his loyalties split and decided to act on the side of his father-in-law. Whatever his reasons, he was alone among the Cavendish sons in supporting his stepfather. Henry and Bess's relationship did not improve after George Talbot's death, and in letters of 1602/3 she accused him of sabotaging the troubled relationship she had with her granddaughter, Henry's niece, Arbella. She referred to him as 'my bad sonne Henry' and accused him of not acting in the best interests of his family.<sup>141</sup>

Even though Gilbert Talbot had supported his stepmother, or at least attempted to remove himself from the fractious situation between his parents during their separation, after George's death in 1590, conflict began between him and Bess, and his Cavendish stepbrothers. In 1591, Bess described his behaviour to William Cecil as 'strange and unkind' as he had agreed and promised her a widow's portion that his father had previously denied to her, but later had gone back on it.<sup>142</sup> He later appeared to follow his father's lead and attempted to deny lands to his Cavendish stepbrothers. Bess sent a letter to Robert Cecil through her son William which stated

---

<sup>138</sup> Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England*.

<sup>139</sup> ID 150, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 2 August 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>

<sup>140</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 84 (10 October 1587).

<sup>141</sup> ID 135, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Henry Broncker, 10 March 1602/3, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=135> ; ID 140, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Robert Cecil, 13 April 1603, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=140>

<sup>142</sup> ID 159, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 11 April 1591, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=159>

that she was 'wronged by those who in reson shold seke my comforte'.<sup>143</sup> Her phrases in these letters suggest some shock that her stepson and her daughter were not treating her in the way she would expect. As a widow and mother Bess expected a level of care and respect from Gilbert that was not forthcoming. Gilbert attempted to sell some lands owned by his stepbrother and brother-in-law, Henry Cavendish, described by Bess as 'most unconscionably and vnnaturally' and later he launched a petition against her in the Court of Chancery.<sup>144</sup> Although Gilbert may have been acting for the interests of his family in his role as husband, father, and head of family, in his status as child he was showing 'unnatural' disobedience to his parent, his stepmother Bess. In 1607, before her death, Gilbert's uncle John Manners attempted to encourage him to make peace with his mother-in-law/stepmother.<sup>145</sup> However, their family ties remained and there is still evidence towards the end of Bess's life that she continued to visit the family and enjoy spending time with her grandchildren. Even her 'bad son' Henry continued to send her letters of good wishes and gifts.<sup>146</sup> Wrangling over family obligations and quarrels was a by-product of remarriage on widening family networks. Although these widened networks with their obligations of care and support for wider kin could be, and often were, useful, when relationships broke down they could also descend into quarrels and confusion. The complex web of loyalties and responsibilities created by the remarriage of parents, and often the cementing of these links through the marriage of stepchildren, could cause tension within the parent-child relationship, particularly at a point of family crisis like the one experienced by the Cavendish/Talbots. And the relationships between step-parents and stepchildren, which were less rigidly defined in terms of their obligations and natural care, were often decided by individual

---

<sup>143</sup> ID 125, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Robert Cecil, 2 June 1600, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=125>

<sup>144</sup> ID 126, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Robert Cecil, 6 October 1600, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=126> ; ID 169, Baron Thomas Ellesmere to Bess of Hardwick, 21 June 1605, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014,, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=169>

<sup>145</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 408 (December 1607).

<sup>146</sup> ID 207, Henry Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick, 6 December 1605, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=207> ; ID 011, Henry Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick, 31 December 1605, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=011>

personalities and situations and their changing loyalties could affect the situation as a whole and the relationships with other members of the family.

### **Legal and financial aspects of remarriage**

There were legal implications for the remarriage of any individual in this period. Widows would usually bring their dower lands, the portion of land that they had brought to the marriage and were entitled to keep, as well as jointure land, owned jointly by the couple which the longest lived was entitled to, to their new marriage.<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, remarriage could cause legal confusion and some of the fears for children were grounded in reality. Although there were concerns about the wellbeing of children after their parent remarried, Hanawalt argues that the number of children was not a major factor in the decision by individuals over whether to remarry, and few historians have focused on the effects of remarriage on a child's legal position.<sup>148</sup> With her focus on wives and widows, Harris acknowledges the potential for conflict in the majority of aristocratic wives' second marriages where they often occupied roles of guardians of their offspring and legal executors of their deceased spouses, which would be further complicated if their new husband also had children from previous marriages or they had more children together.<sup>149</sup> As shown in the previous chapter where family roles could overlap and cause tension after a death, a remarriage also prompted a renegotiation of authority and of resources within the family. Thomas Thynne made his second wife, Catherine Howard, the executor of his will, although also left a condition on this. He stated that she was to 'remise and release unto myne heire [...] All her dower and title of dower which she may claime therein, or to any parte thereof' and that if she did not do so, would no longer be permitted to act as executor.<sup>150</sup> He also foresaw potential disagreements between her and his overseer which he hoped could be 'composed and arbitrated'. Thomas's heir was his eldest son, James, from his first marriage to Maria Touchet, and he must have had some concern that his wife would not give up her claim to her stepson's estates. However, even though he appeared to have some concerns over his wife's ability to execute his will to his specifications, he still preferred to give the job to her over others. Concerns about wives retaining control of lands at the

---

<sup>147</sup> Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 19.

<sup>148</sup> Hanawalt, 'Remarriage as an Option...', p. 153; One other exception is Stephen Collins, 'British Stepfamily Relationships, 1500 – 1800', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1991), pp. 331 – 44 who identifies the threat posed to inheritance as a dominant theme in considering remarriage.

<sup>149</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 118.

<sup>150</sup> PROB 11/183/753 (20 October 1640).

expense of their stepsons were based on real cases from earlier in the period, for example, after her husband, Sir Robert Lee, died in 1539, Lettice Peniston entered into a lengthy dispute over his will with his heir, her stepson Anthony. Robert had granted Lettice the manor of Briddesthorpe and all of her jointure lands for the term of her life, on the condition that she release claim on her dower lands to Anthony. Robert seemed to have anticipated some dispute between the two as he specified that Anthony was to be his sole executor as long as he carried out all the conditions, particularly the bequests to his wife Lettice and other children.<sup>151</sup>

That Lettice was Anthony's stepmother, not his birth mother altered the dynamics of authority in this case. Using this case and others, Harris notes that women were more likely to face difficulties in taking possession of their jointures from heirs who were not their sons, particularly on an emotional level where 'stepsons may well have resented the women who took their mother's place in the family.'<sup>152</sup> In this case it certainly appears, both from Robert Lee's conditions and the behaviour of Lettice and Anthony after his death that the two did not have a close relationship, exacerbated by the property rights and overlapping claims on the Lee estates. Anthony initiated a Chancery case against Lettice over the detention of the deeds of various manors and lands and the dispute between them is also documented in letters to Thomas Cromwell.<sup>153</sup> Cromwell had positions in the major departments of government, including the Chancery and was a close friend and adviser of Henry VIII. In February 1539 both she and her childhood friend Sir Francis Bryan wrote to him to plead her case. Bryan described her as Robert Lee's 'poor wife' and in this initial letter Lettice described herself as both 'sorrowful' and desolate', asking for Cromwell's help if anyone 'would wrong her', presumably in a legal sense where he had the most power to intervene on her behalf.<sup>154</sup> Anthony was also influential at court and a friend of both Cromwell and the King himself, leading to Cromwell ordering that Lettice must abide by Robert's will and should release her dower and other items which she held, including household stuff and plate that had belonged to him and should be passed to his heir.<sup>155</sup>

This case shows us a woman whose second marriage had given her financial and legal influence over her husband and stepson, and responsibility for her natural

---

<sup>151</sup> TNA PROB 11/27/468 (10 May 1539).

<sup>152</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 135.

<sup>153</sup> TNA C 1/847/7 (c. 1533 – 38).

<sup>154</sup> TNA SP 1/143 f. 176 (28 February 1539); TNA SP 1/143 f. 177 (28 February 1539); TNA SP 1/151 f. 171 (1539); TNA SP 1/242 f. 296 (1539).

<sup>155</sup> TNA SP 1/156 f. 154 (1539).

children, thus acting in her different roles as wife, mother and stepmother. The overlap of her concerns and responsibilities for herself and her children brought her into conflict with her stepson, who was acting in a legal capacity as the head of his immediate family and did not appear to regard her as part of it. This certainly supports the idea that bequests to widows were intended to be fair and sufficient for their maintenances, but no more. Anne Bacon continued correspondence with her stepsons Nicholas and Nathaniel Bacon, her husband's sons from his first marriage. As heir, Nicholas Bacon inherited the bulk of his father's estates and entered into a legal dispute with his half-brother, Anthony, over the lease of some land he had inherited from his father. Anne corresponded with Nicholas at this time, emphasising their family connection, 'Yow being the sonne, and I the wyff, and now the weedoe of the same good father and husbände' and expressing the hope that they could be friendly the next time they met.<sup>156</sup> In this letter she somewhat hesitantly offered advice to Nicholas about how he should conduct his affairs and counsel but the tone is very different from that of her letters to her natural sons with whom she was very forceful in giving advice. Anne herself had been in a similar position as a child. As an illegitimate child, she had a mother and stepmother living at the same time and differences can be seen in the way she addressed her letters to them, taking a much more formal and deferential tone to her higher-status stepmother.<sup>157</sup> In a later letter she referred to treatments that Nicholas had taken for gout, suggesting similar ones for Anthony who also suffered with the condition, thus implying some knowledge of her stepson and his everyday life.<sup>158</sup> Mair states that Anne continued to fulfil her stepmotherly duty, such as by sending letters of formal congratulations when her stepson Nathaniel's daughter was christened.<sup>159</sup> It is evident that she maintained a relationship with them, despite any legal disputes, although did act as a source of support for her natural sons whenever possible.

For some widows, this function of support in favour of their children's causes could be taken on by their new husband and there is ample evidence to show how remarriage could benefit the legal position and cause of a child.<sup>160</sup> In c.1515 Richard Elyot took a case to Chancery with his wife Elizabeth and stepdaughter Dorothy Codrynton against the father of her deceased husband.<sup>161</sup> As her stepfather, Richard, helped represent Dorothy's interests at court in an attempt to force

---

<sup>156</sup> Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 79 – 80 (May – July 1579).

<sup>157</sup> Wall, 'Deference and Defiance', p. 85.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180 – 1 (before 3 June 1594).

<sup>159</sup> Mair, 'Material Lies', p. 62.

<sup>160</sup> Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 80.

<sup>161</sup> TNA C 1/405/29 (c. 1515 – 18).

Christopher Codrington to convey the lands he had promised to be settled on her on her marriage with his son. Richard Elyot also remembered his stepchildren in his will. For younger children, this protection often came in the form of legal guardianships. In the event of a father's death, the guardianship of heirs under the age of twenty-one passed to the monarch who could then sell the wardship for profit. For these younger children, wardships were often bought by their new stepfathers. As wards were at the mercy of their guardians who had a large amount of influence over their estates, education and marriage, it was often seen as beneficial to keep a wardship within a family. This could mean within a stepfamily. It is likely that Honor Lisle had control over her eldest son John Basset's wardship after the death of his father, as it had been purchased by a family friend, but her second husband still made sure to purchase it after their marriage in 1528. Mothers often sought their children's wardships themselves so the motivation behind a stepfather taking on a wardship here is clear. Women usually wanted the protection of their children entrusted to a male relative or friend whom they trusted to have their best interests at heart. This helps to explain why stepfathers would be entrusted with wardship responsibilities and shows how ideally they were supposed to represent their wards. Arthur Lisle took a leading role in his stepson John Basset's case to inherit the Beaumont lands of his father, which took place over several years.<sup>162</sup> Both he and Honor were in contact with lawyers in London about how best to proceed to further his claim, and the decision to send him for legal training as part of his education is likely to have been linked to this need to arrange his financial affairs.<sup>163</sup> As his stepfather and guardian, Arthur's role in promoting his stepson's interests would have been expected and seen as appropriate, although it was his mother who was credited by the King with 'the pains' she had taken over this issue.<sup>164</sup>

Although less readily seen in popular culture at this time, there were also contemporary concerns about the role of the stepfather, usually in relation to his legal power over his stepchild. As Collins shows, allegations were made against stepmothers who sought the disinheritance of the children of their first marriage in favour of those from their second, and the unease over the role of the stepfather was linked to this. The concern being that he would not protect their prospective wealth rather than that he would ill-treat them.<sup>165</sup> Hurstfield's survey of the Elizabethan

---

<sup>162</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 4, pp. 1 – 10.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 39 – 41 (4 March 1536), p. 60 (13 July 1536).

<sup>164</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 212 – 13 (10 September 1538).

<sup>165</sup> Collins, "A Kind of Lawful Adultery", in *The Changing Face of Death*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth, p. 39.

Court of Wards shows that some contemporaries considered that a child might actually be better off being sold to a guardian who planned to marry the ward to his own child, therefore tying them into their own family, rather than a stepfather who would be less concerned about their welfare.<sup>166</sup> This assumption that a stepfather would not care for his wife's offspring must have been decided on the basis of individual cases but it is telling that this consideration existed. Heather Dubrow's article on parental death agrees, showing concerns that stepfathers were more likely to be a threat to a child's material wellbeing than a stepmother.<sup>167</sup> Lady Dorothy Wharton wrote to the Earl of Rutland that her husband was destroying woodland that was due to her son as part of his inheritance. The land was in the forest over which the Earl had control and she pleaded with him not to allow the felling and sale of her son's woodland. Robert Cecil, as the head of the Court of Wards and Liveries from 1599, wrote to the Earl soon after to ask him not to grant the licence to Lord Wharton before he had checked that the felling of the woods and sale of the land was not prejudicial to the ward.<sup>168</sup> In this case, the Court of Wards stepped in to protect the child's inheritance, against the actions of his own stepfather, something his mother also had to petition to stop.

However, stepmothers also had the potential to harm the inheritance of their stepchildren. In the 1590s in the Willoughby family, a father damaged the prospects of his children by his second marriage and his wife continued to exploit them after she died. After Sir Francis Willoughby married his second wife, Dorothy, there is evidence that his children resented her presence with descendant Cassandra Willoughby noting that 'from the old papers one may believe that Sir Francis neglected all his children, and made it his chief care to raise a great sum of money for his lady.'<sup>169</sup> Francis died in 1596, leaving Dorothy pregnant, and she used her pregnancy to exploit her position further. Francis's heir, his son-in-law Percival, had a troop of guards stationed on the Willoughby estate, which she had inherited in right of her unborn child, to monitor who came to visit her. Dorothy was delivered of a daughter who died in her first year, but afterwards kept much of the land and goods she had inherited from Francis and took these to her subsequent marriage a few months later, leaving Percival with debts and mortgages to pay off to support the suits he had launched against her.<sup>170</sup> Cassandra Willoughby's younger brother had

---

<sup>166</sup> J. Hurstfield, 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', p. 612.

<sup>167</sup> Heather Dubrow, 'The Message from Marcade', in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, eds. Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff, pp. 156 – 57.

<sup>168</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 385 (5 October 1602).

<sup>169</sup> HMC Middleton, p. 582.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 583.



disagreement with their stepfather over family finances in the 1680s which may have influenced her recording of the incident, but also shows it was an enduring issue in family life.<sup>171</sup> These examples are rarer but do show that wealth was a more important factor in the behaviour and potential legal power of step-parents to financially harm their stepchildren. It is true that stepfathers, and sometimes stepmothers, were often in a position of legal control over their stepchildren. However, as is argued below, the relational and emotional ties experienced by many blended families, not least the influence of the wife, the mother of their stepchildren, meant that ensuring their wellbeing and financial protection was often part of the wider family's success and prosperity. Remarriage linked families, and it was generally not advisable to ensure the failure or ruin any of its constituent parts. Step-parents did have an interest in ensuring the success of this branch of their family. The following section explores examples of how step-parents could influence the education and future careers of their stepchildren and their efforts in this show their care and interest in them.

### **Educational and career prospects in a blended family**

The entry of a step-parent into a child's life meant another adult had influence over their upbringing, education and so, future career. This could have a great impact on a child's future, particularly if their new step-parent was of a higher status with wide, influential networks. Access to wider social networks and social mobility was a common goal of marriage for noble classes in this period and those looking to remarry had the same aims. For widows and widowers the benefit for their children of a match with a man or woman of higher status than themselves, would have surely contributed to their choice of partner. Chapter one looked at the education of aristocratic children arguing that parents aimed for 'socialisation' where their child would gain skills needed to make their way at court or as successful estate managers. This section considers how far step-parents also shared these aims for the education of their stepchildren and the impact they could have on their future careers.

At the time of their marriage, Arthur and Honor Lisle had ten children under the age of twenty-one, although as St. Clare Byrne notes, by the standards of the time, they

---

<sup>171</sup> Elizabeth Hagglund, 'Willoughby, Cassandra [*married name* Cassandra Brydges, duchess of Chandos] (1670–1735)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/72388>, accessed 5 June 2015].

'would not have been considered excessively "charged with children"'.<sup>172</sup> When Arthur took up the post of Lord Deputy of Calais in 1533 he moved there with Honor, his eldest daughter Frances, and Honor's four daughters. Arthur's two younger daughters and all of Honor's children had periods of time in education or service away from Calais, but it served as their family home at other times. As the majority of their children were educated either in England or northern France, there are a great deal of letters concerning their education and wellbeing. Chapter one considered many of these letters in the context of exploring authority in parent-child relationships and how the letters of Arthur and Honor Lisle and their children show a shift as children began to take responsibility for their own lives and came to challenge the authority of their parents. Their family situation and the remarriage of their parents influenced their education and future careers. Rosenthal in his work on fifteenth-century widows, suggests that there is little evidence of a 'mutual assistance treaty' to care for stepchildren and although this might be true in official documentation where children were rarely mentioned on marriage contracts, correspondence and everyday experience suggests otherwise.<sup>173</sup>

Generally, letters about Honor's Basset children were addressed to her and letters about Arthur's Plantagenet children to him. However, they both made decisions about each other's children as well. As Frances Plantagenet was living with her parents and two stepsisters Philippa and Katherine Basset, it can be assumed that Honor provided her day-to-day care along with that of her two natural daughters. When Honor's friends wrote to her in Calais they passed greetings on to all the children without differentiating between her stepdaughter and natural daughters.<sup>174</sup> For her two stepdaughters living in England, Honor was in contact with those in charge of their day-to-day care. She was informed about their movements and health, as well as providing them with clothes.<sup>175</sup> Again, there was no differentiation in the letters from employees and friends when asking for items or providing information. In the case of somewhat neglected youngest daughter, Bridget Plantagenet, Honor did at least once write to her guardian asking after her health and what items she needed.<sup>176</sup> That she needed to ask this indicates her interest in and responsibility for her daughter, but also that she had not been provided with this

---

<sup>172</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p. 7.

<sup>173</sup> Rosenthal, 'Fifteenth-Century Widows and Widowhood', in *Wife and Widow*, ed. Sheridan Walker, p. 37 – 38.

<sup>174</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 2 pp. 470 – 71 (27 April 1535).

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 626 – 67 (22 November 1533); vol. 5, pp. 69 – 70 (15 March 1538), pp. 95 – 96 (7 April 1538).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 93 (26 February 1535).

information by her husband. Bridget probably found that her stepmother's care of her exceeded that of her father. As was shown in chapter one, mothers and fathers often occupied separate roles when caring for children so it is not strange to find Honor Lisle taking on responsibility for clothing and health. However it does show us that these gendered parenting roles were not affected by the fact that Honor was not Bridget's natural mother. It further adds to the findings that children commonly found themselves cared for by a variety of parental figures, which could include step-relations.

Honor is likely to have monitored the education of her daughters and stepdaughters who lived in Calais with her. Her daughters benefitted from the experience of living in and helping to manage a diplomatic household, regularly meeting important dignitaries and merchants, thanks to their stepfather's position. Margaret Clifford was educated by her stepmother from the age of eight, and Nathaniel Bacon utilised his stepmother, Anne, to educate his new wife in the demands of being an aristocratic wife.<sup>177</sup> Nathaniel was in the advantageous position of having a well-connected and very well-educated stepmother who could instruct his wife, and owed him a duty of obligation to do so. A letter from the Rutland manuscripts shows us an example of a stepmother taking charge of her step-granddaughter's education. Roger Manners reported to the fourth Earl of Rutland that his stepmother, the countess of Bedford, 'spoke much to me of her great care and willingness to do her best endeavour for the education of the young lady'; his daughter Bridget.<sup>178</sup> This letter gives us an example of a stepmother taking her duties of educating her stepchildren a generation further by extending her help to her stepson's daughter. However, gender was not always the factor by which the interests of children were promoted. In 1556, Margaret Donington, countess of Bath was instrumental in arranging her stepson George's placement at Furnivall's Inn.<sup>179</sup> She wrote to her husband that she had spoken to the principal who, 'will see that he shall apply his books', and hoped he was happy with her decision.<sup>180</sup> These cases show us that gender was a factor in determining which parent was responsible for which children, but in the case of families after a remarriage where different partners had access to

---

<sup>177</sup> CAC WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3, p. 145; Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, pp. 69 – 70 (late 1569-72); Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 32 – 33. Due to Anne's own high level of education, it is likely that she had ensured a better standard of education for her own sons than their older half-brothers had received.

<sup>178</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 239 (January 1587/8).

<sup>179</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/63 (23 March 1556); 88/1/65 (17 March 1556).

<sup>180</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/65 (17 March 1556).

different networks, these decisions were often made based who had the appropriate friends and contacts.

Bess of Hardwick's letters show how couples continued to work together to parent children and stepchildren in the later sixteenth century. In around 1570, Henry Cavendish wrote to his mother to let her know of a 'misfortune' that had happened in his house.<sup>181</sup> Two of his servants had quarrelled, ending in a violent episode where one killed the other. As a twenty-year-old man in his own household Henry still felt a requirement to inform his mother of the situation, and the letter was largely an apology to her for troubling her with the news and the worry that this situation had taken place in his house. A postscript shows that Bess passed this letter on to her husband, George, partly to inform him but also presumably because this was a matter of family importance that, as Henry's stepfather, he needed to know about quickly. George asked Bess's advice on finding a place for his son Gilbert and her daughter Mary after their marriage.<sup>182</sup> When George and Bess were together, there is evidence that they wrote joint letters to or about their children. In 1580 in a letter to servant Thomas Baldwin, George wrote, 'Commend me to my boies & will them to applie their studies' then asking him to give them £10 each, as requested by Bess.<sup>183</sup> It is not clear exactly which children he was referring to, but the reference to study and the date suggest George's two younger sons Henry and Edward Talbot who would have been about twenty at the time.<sup>184</sup> If this is the case, then, as their stepmother, Bess was supporting their wellbeing by sending them money, and George was sure to attribute this to her. She also added her own greeting to them at the bottom of the letter.

However, the behaviour of children could also become a source of tension between step-parents over how to deal with children whose behaviour was potentially embarrassing to the family and at risk of damaging its reputation. Charles

---

<sup>181</sup> ID 009, Henry Cavendish to Bess of Hardwick/Bess of Hardwick to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, [c. 1570], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=009>

<sup>182</sup> ID 074, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Bess of Hardwick and The Peak's Men, 7 June 1575, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=074>

<sup>183</sup> ID 195, Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Thomas Baldwin, 8 February 1581/2, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=195>

<sup>184</sup> Bess's sons were all at least 30 by this time so it seems unlikely they would have been advised to continue with their studies in this way.

Cavendish, Bess of Hardwick's third son, wrote to his stepfather some time before 1577, when he was in his twenties, to appeal to his stepfather over his behaviour. He apologised for a 'crooked misfortune' where he had injured a friend during sword practice and begged his stepfather to appease his mother on his behalf. Charles believed that he could only be saved from her disgrace by his stepfather, 'whose wisdom I know can temper this conceit of hers, I shall rest in doubt not to be restored to her favour.'<sup>185</sup> There is no letter to show whether George supported his stepson's cause at this time but in 1579, he wrote to Bess about her son stating:

I would have you provide for Charles your son who is easily led to folly. For within ii night[s] after you went from me, his man Morten enticed his mastar Blyth & my Armourer to go stealing into Staly Park in the night and I would wish you to advise him from those doings lest some mishap might come thereby to his harm and your grief.<sup>186</sup>

As Bess's son, George seemed to have felt it was her responsibility to speak to Charles, or that he would listen to her (his mother) more effectively, but Charles's behaviour was still something he felt responsible for. The tone of the letter also suggests that he disapproved of his stepson's behaviour and wanted to make sure that his mother was informed about it, perhaps because this was not the first time he had been asked to step in. Their marriage shows that both took responsibility for and interest in each other's children. That the parents discussed the discipline and upbringing of both their natural children and stepchildren shows that the family was viewed as a whole entity with both parents responsible for all children, although if a child was not behaving well, a step-parent could distance themselves to a degree.

The remarriage of a parent could completely alter a child's own marriage arrangement. It was expected that parents would arrange their children's marriages because of the importance of the decision to the wider family's status. Step-parents were just as interested in the marriage arrangements of their stepchildren. As these children were now a part of their family, the family they married into would become part of their kin network too. William Stonor was in frequent contact with the proposed match for his eldest step-daughter, Katherine, and it appears that the man in question, Thomas Betson, wrote to William as the head of her family and the person ultimately in charge of the alliance.<sup>187</sup> When Margaret Donington was in the

---

<sup>185</sup> HMC Bath, p. 22 (Before 1577).

<sup>186</sup> ID 074, George Talbot to Bess of Hardwick and The Peak's Men, 7 June 1575, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=074>

<sup>187</sup> Carpenter (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290 – 1483*, p. 258 (c. 1476); pp. 262 – 64 (c. 1476).

process of arranging her eldest son Thomas Kitson's marriage to Jane, daughter of Lord Paget, her husband, Thomas's stepfather, wrote to her with his thoughts on the match. He gave his support that he 'right well lyke and am very glad' of it and praised Lord Paget as, 'a lovyng and frendlye gentyllman'.<sup>188</sup> However, the purpose of the letters is quite clearly to demonstrate his authority over the matter. He stated that Margaret should conclude the arrangements, so it is clear that he wanted to act as if giving her permission. Even though she was Thomas's natural mother, he still had a role to play in confirming his marriage. Stepfathers could influence marriage arrangements in this way and also provide further networks to find partners in and, crucially, more money to offer in making an arrangement. When a match for Katherine Basset was being initiated in 1538, John Husee wrote to her mother over the financial matters. It had been inquired what Honor would be able to give along with Katherine's marriage and Husee suggested at least 300 marks, if not 500.<sup>189</sup> Katherine's father had left his daughters only 100 marks each in his will, and although it was still unlikely the Lisle finances would be able to find as much as 500; the fact that an increased amount was being mooted shows the increase in resources that Honor had access to for her children after her second marriage. The demand for this much money must also have meant the match was with a higher status groom than her father could have expected for her. While Honor's Basset children gained much in the way of future prospects from their stepfather, her Basset stepchildren, the children from her husband's first marriage, may have had their chances of marriage damaged by the marriage of Honor and Arthur. In her consideration of single women in this period Harris argues that some women remained single because of the deaths and remarriage of their parents. Their parents might be diverted away from arranging matches for them because of their own matches, or the matches of the children in their new family.<sup>190</sup> She uses Honor's stepdaughters Jane and Thomasine Basset who were in their early twenties when their father died and subsequently had no one focused on arranging matches for them, as examples of this. Thus it can be seen in the Lisle family, as well as other families, that a remarriage could benefit the prospects for a child's marriage if their new parent was also concerned with arranging it, but could likewise damage their

---

<sup>188</sup> CUL Hengrave Hall MS 88/1/89 (3 May 1557); Chapter two considers how parents' good qualities were important in the making of marriage arrangements and had a direct impact on the qualities of their children – this was also the case here.

<sup>189</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 130 – 31 (18 May 1538).

<sup>190</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 91.

prospects if they were forgotten about or passed over because of an insecurity of status, or their careers being subsumed under their higher status siblings.

Another way in which a remarriage could have significant consequences for children was the common practice of arranging matches between stepsiblings. John Basset married his stepsister Frances Plantagenet in 1538 and they had two children. Their son and heir, Arthur, was born after John's death at the age of twenty-three in 1541. This marriage had probably been planned almost as soon as Arthur and Honor had married and took place when the couple were in their late teens. This was an excellent match for John Basset, a landed gentleman but not part of the aristocracy, as Frances was descended from royal blood through her father, and the Berkeleys, Talbots and Lisles through her mother who had been a Baroness in her own right.<sup>191</sup> The Lisles were keen to find out what Frances's position would be after her marriage and a letter to Honor in 1537 shows that Husee had consulted Eleanor Manners, Lady Rutland, who 'stendeth in doubt of that matter' and also the Heralds of Arms, who 'saith plainly that the woman shall never lose no part of her degree, but shall always be taken as her father's daughter'.<sup>192</sup> The fact that Arthur and Honor made these enquiries may, as Hanawalt suggests, indicate that John and Frances had suggested the marriage themselves based on genuine affection, but their parents clearly agreed to the match.<sup>193</sup> The marriage of the heirs to both families strengthened family ties even further than the marriage of Arthur and Honor. Margaret Donington married her third husband, John Bouchier, as part of a double ceremony where his son and heir, also named John, was married to her daughter, Frances, attempting to ensure that her daughter would become the next countess of Bath, after her mother. Lettice Peniston married her daughter Elizabeth Lee from her second marriage to Sir Robert Lee, to the second son of her third husband, Sir Thomas Tresham. Although neither were the heirs of their parents, it seems that marriages of stepsiblings were still considered a good way of connecting families as it created even stronger ties between a family. Wives especially were expected to work for the benefit of their new family. If their new husband was also their stepbrother then the ties of obligation they already had would be strengthened by marriage, and this would be true for other family members who would now have a double-bond with them. For a parent who had married up in status it would have been sensible to marry one of their children into this new family as well. The

---

<sup>191</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 4, pp. 73 – 74.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 74 – 75 (23 June 1537).

<sup>193</sup> Hanawalt, 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', p. 200.

intermarriage of several stepchildren, as Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot arranged for their children, created complicated and close ties between all the children, which meant they were responsible and interested in the behaviour and actions of the others throughout their lives.

### **Religious and political effects of remarriage**

Remarriage in aristocratic and gentry families often had political and religious dimensions. Marriage to a high-status or well-connected individual brought gains of patronage and support to their new spouse and children. A remarriage meant that any stepchildren would also be incorporated into these political networks. This final section considers how the politics of the late medieval and early modern period affected these aristocratic families and how far a child could be affected by their step-parent's political networks. In the sixteenth century these political networks were underscored by the religious tensions of the Reformation and the confessional choice of a stepparent could also impact on a child's future.

In aristocratic and gentry families, the aim of many marriages was to secure a rise in social status. Men and women who remarried also sought to improve their social status and that of their children. This meant that a blended family could contain members of different social standing, so requiring adherence to social codes of deference. Honor Lisle's first husband had been a country knight, but her second husband was a Viscount of blood relation to King Henry VIII. As a Viscountess, her new status raised her social position and her stepchildren from her first marriage were required to acknowledge this position. When Arthur and Honor moved to Calais, this left single stepdaughter Jane Basset to run her own, independent life, which would not normally have been an option for her, on the provision that she maintained the Basset lands on behalf of her stepmother and half-brother John.<sup>194</sup> Her family circumstances allowed her to lead this independent life in Devon; yet, she was still dependent on her stepmother. Although the two women may have been of a similar age, there is no question that Jane was subordinate to Honor. In one long letter of 1535, Jane wrote about her life that she was, 'dwelling here under your goodness, towards the augmentation and amendment of my poor living, as in apparelling and welcoming of your ladyship's friends whensoever they come, for your sake and honour.'<sup>195</sup> This shows her deference to Honor and also how much she needed her support. She was keen to show that she was useful to her

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 35 – 36.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 56 – 58 (13 September 1535).



stepmother by remaining resident in her Devon house and how dependent she was on her support, even for simple items and food. Jane made much of her connection with her stepmother and informed her of news from the estates, and of her other sisters, but this relationship must also have benefitted Honor. Other stepchildren can be seen showing deference and considering the wishes of their step-parents. The Earl of Rutland in 1587 was required to ask his stepmother, the countess of Bedford, if he could build a fish pool in the common fields of her land, which would presumably pass to him on her death, but at that moment belonged to her.<sup>196</sup> In this situation it was useful to keep in contact with one's stepmother as they controlled land that would later pass to them.

That step-relations only continued with relationships that were useful to them is evident in the Lisle correspondence. Honor Lisle seems only to have been in regular contact with Jane Basset who provided news of her other sisters and of the Basset lands in Devon. Arthur Lisle only remained in contact with one of his stepsons, John Dudley, his first wife's eldest son from her first marriage, but neither of Dudley's two younger brothers. Perhaps they were not as useful to him as John who, as a well-connected courtier was an important connection to keep in his network. Dudley had been brought up in the house of Edward Guildford, friend of Henry VIII and active in his service, and by the 1530s was a friend of the King himself and a 'minor member' of the Boleyn and Cromwell faction, in its ascendancy at court.<sup>197</sup> As Arthur had no male heir, Dudley was also, in right of his mother, next in line to the title of Viscount Lisle, so it was also important for him to keep a relationship with his stepfather. There was some tension in the relationship between these two wealthy and well-connected men, largely over their family circumstances. In 1533, Arthur Lisle also wrote to Thomas Cromwell in his capacity as a government official, not a friend, over a dispute with Dudley.<sup>198</sup> Arthur argued that he had been left lands by his first wife, Dudley's mother, which Dudley had now sold without his permission to Sir Edward Seymour. There was confusion over this matter and whether Arthur had indeed been left the lands. Regardless of the outcome, it shows us that men and women could both come into conflict with stepchildren over inheritance issues and that these conflicts were exacerbated by status and political networks.

---

<sup>196</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 231 (12 November 1587).

<sup>197</sup> David Loades, 'Dudley, John, duke of Northumberland (1504–1553)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8156>, accessed 13 May 2015].

<sup>198</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 664 – 68. Lisle's religious conservatism prohibited a close alliance with Cromwell.

Patterns of using horizontal networks made by marriage that Harris ascribes to women's networking practices also applied to men, and examples of this can be seen when looking at Arthur Lisle and John Dudley. Even after Arthur remarried and despite initial tensions, Dudley remained in regular contact with his stepfather and looked after his half-sister Elizabeth, Arthur's second daughter from his first marriage, in his household. He signed himself in one letter as 'your son to Comand during lyff' showing the maintenance of their relationship and its continuation into his adulthood.<sup>199</sup> These ties were created by remarriages, but often continued to be used even after the marriage had ended. The creation of a step-parent/stepchild bond was also an enduring one. A letter from the Lisle correspondence shows how the networks of stepfamilies could clash over the best way to provide for their children's futures, and how two men could attempt to assert their authority in the wider kin network over this type of issue. Elizabeth Plantagenet, Arthur Lisle's daughter from his first marriage, had been resident in her half-brother's John Dudley's household from at least 1533. In 1538, when Elizabeth was probably in her late teens, Dudley wrote to Arthur with concerns about her future. He wrote that he trusted his stepfather to do his best for his daughters, specifically in the pursuit of arranging good marriages for them but added the warning that:

And yet for my part I have and will do as becometh a brother to do to his sister; but if your lordship should not be as good lord and father unto her as to the rest of your daughters ye may be sure there is but few would harken unto her; for of late there was one brake off from communication of marriage only because it was bruited that you have given your land wholly to my sister Frances.<sup>200</sup>

He was concerned that Elizabeth was being somewhat neglected in England, in favour of her sister Frances who had recently been married to her stepbrother John Basset. It seems a potential marriage negotiation for Elizabeth had broken down over concerns that her sister had been prioritised in dowry lands. This letter shows John Dudley acting as a surrogate parental figure to Elizabeth by stating concern over her father's judgement. He was evidently concerned about his young half-sister and whether her father was looking out for her future to the best of his ability. Although technically in the position of child, Dudley was clearly not afraid to criticise his stepfather in order to ensure his sister's future was provided for. John Dudley was, at this time, seeking further promotions at court and had obvious dynastic concerns about who his sisters married and made alliances with. It is likely he would

---

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p. 546 (8 August 1535).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 42 – 43 (23 February 1538).

have aimed to marry them to men who would serve his own interests for his family's rise in status, and in his role as brother he seems to have had some influence. Anthony and Francis Bacon might have expected help in establishing their careers from their elder half-brothers who were wealthy and well-connected at the Inns of Court and in Parliament, but their relationship was irrevocably damaged by disputes over their father's will and so could not depend on this support.<sup>201</sup>

Gilbert Talbot on occasions found himself with obligations of support to his stepsiblings. In 1608 he took it upon himself to warn and advise his stepbrother, Henry Cavendish, on the impending death of his mother Bess of Hardwick. Henry's full-blood brother, William Cavendish, was apparently planning to seize parts of Henry's inheritance.<sup>202</sup> Gilbert was the wealthiest and most influential of the children after inheriting his father's title of earl of Shrewsbury in 1590 and aimed to take on a mediating role between his step-brothers (also his brothers-in-law) by advising Henry to contact William and try to mitigate the damage he might cause. This was also a reflection of the deterioration of his relationship with his stepmother as he sought to lessen her influence against the strongest of his alliances with his stepbrother Henry. During the marital conflict of Gilbert's father and stepmother, Henry had been the stepbrother who showed the most loyalty towards his stepfather, Gilbert's father George. It is possible that Gilbert felt more duty towards his stepbrother because of this, or that this had led to a closer relationship. As both were eldest sons and heirs to their fathers, their alliance may have had mutual benefits. Although Henry did not have as high a position as Gilbert, alliance between the two men had been made on many levels including as stepbrothers, brothers-in-law, and eldest sons and heirs.

For younger children, the political networks of a stepparent could affect their education and future career. Although, in the Lisle family, the majority of correspondence about all the children went through Honor, some was directed to Arthur, particularly regarding the education of his stepsons John, George, and James Basset. That Arthur had no male heir makes his input into his stepsons' educations more significant. John Basset, as heir to his father's estates, remained in England in 1533 and continued his education at the Inns of Court, a typical pattern for aristocratic heirs that we have seen in other families of the period. George and James Basset were originally educated in England in the service of Hugh Cook, abbot of Reading, a friend and supporter of the King. James was later sent to France

---

<sup>201</sup> Jardine and Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune*, p. 69.

<sup>202</sup> HMC Bath, p. 131 – 32 (January 4 1607/8).

to further his education in Paris. St. Clare Byrne states that these arrangements show Arthur designing a new kind of education for them, one that gained favour in the 1530s as it embodied the more practical advantages of both noble and professional cultures.<sup>203</sup> She goes further in arguing that 'the moving spirit throughout must have been not their own mother, but Arthur Lisle, who meant to fit them for the new world with whose needs and demands he was acquainted at first hand.'<sup>204</sup> Bearing this in mind, the fact that Arthur was consulted and made decisions about his stepsons shows how influential a stepfather could be on his stepchildren's careers. Updates about the boys were supplied to Arthur from their guardians. Guardianship of a child related to a man of his status was an important job and they were keen to let him know of the health of the boys and how well they were being cared for.<sup>205</sup>

James Basset's precocious letter writing and ability to exert his own authority over his education has already been shown and, indeed, it is James who occupies much of the correspondence with his parents, including Arthur who, it can be argued, he spent the most energy on.<sup>206</sup> It is also letters about James that demonstrate the real benefits of having an aristocrat of status, indeed a blood relation of the King, as a stepfather. When James wanted to move into living quarters at the college, it was his stepfather that he directed the request to, and also Arthur that his guardian checked the arrangements with.<sup>207</sup> James's demands on his guardians in Paris were time-consuming and their willingness to continue acquiescing to his complaints and requests demonstrate the amount of respect Arthur could demand.<sup>208</sup> His first guardian, Guillaume de Poyet, president of the *Parlement* of Paris under the patronage of the queen-mother, wrote that he would, 'take all pains possible both to do and to have done for him everything even as your and my lady his mother desire it, and as well for your honour as if he were my own child', while his later guardian R. Wauchop assured Arthur that 'every one of my friends at the College shall have an eye to him'.<sup>209</sup> Guardians of George Basset also saw their role as important and showed deference to their charge's influential stepfather. Jean Desjardins stressed the boy's good qualities, writing: 'I find him a child of gentle conditions and of a very

---

<sup>203</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p.75.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 78.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 504 – 05 (19 August 1533).

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 106 – 07.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 474 (22 August 1537), p. 479 (September 1537).

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 503 – 04.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 116 (14 August 1535).

good understanding, also obedient.<sup>210</sup> Others were keen to praise James as well with claims of his 'wit and towardness, which is far beyond the praise and esteem your lord hath made of it' reported to Arthur.<sup>211</sup> It seems that the practice of praising a child to their parent in the hope of provoking a positive reaction was also thought to work on stepfathers.

The parent who had the most useful connections for the child would take the lead in their preferment. Arthur continued to make decisions about the careers of his stepsons, attempting to use his connections to men like Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury to ensure a post in the Church for James Basset, even though he was too young. Instead, James was taken into the service of Bishop Gardiner, at that time the most influential member of Henry VIII's council, something made possible by his stepfather's status and connections.<sup>212</sup> These individual connections appear to have been influential in who took the lead over a child's education and promotion. Arthur was kept informed occasionally of his stepdaughter Anne's wellbeing when she was placed in the service of Madame de Riou of a well-connected French noble family, as mentioned in chapter one. It was mostly Thibault Rouault, Sieur De Riou who wrote to him, where Madame De Riou always wrote to Honor.<sup>213</sup> In this case it seems as simple as the male head of household keeping the father informed and his wife keeping the mother informed, although sometimes Madame De Riou wrote separate letters to Arthur and Honor.<sup>214</sup> This may have had a more practical explanation: James's guardian Guillaume Legras, a wealthy merchant and friend of the family, apologised for not writing directly to Honor, explaining that he had not done so because she could not read French.<sup>215</sup> This may also explain separate letters from Madame de Riou and the fact that Sieur De Riou never wrote to her. However, there were occasions where it made sense for one parent to take over the promotion of a child because of their gender and the networks they accessed through it. John Basset, although an heir in his own right, was well below the status of his stepfather and used Arthur's connections to ensure a good room at the Inns of Court as well as the protection of Arthur's influential friends.<sup>216</sup> After his arrival at Lincoln's Inn in 1535, John Grenville wrote to Lord Lisle that John

---

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 98 – 99 (28 November 1536).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 110 – 01 (12 December 1534).

<sup>212</sup> Clayton, 'Basset, James (c.1526–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70827>, accessed 13 May 2015].

<sup>213</sup> St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, vol. 3, p. 144 (11 May 1534).

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 146 – 47 (9 August 1534).

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., vol. 4, p. 474 (22 August 1537).

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 374 – 75 (7 January 1535); vol. 4, p. 21.

was 'merry' with all of Arthur's friends there.<sup>217</sup> Grenville was Honor's nephew, yet it was still Arthur to whom he reported John's progress to. Perhaps the fact that John was with Arthur's friends made it more important to inform him personally that his stepson was benefitting from his connections. Similarly, when Honor was attempting to secure her daughter a place at court, she undertook all of the correspondence about it and used her female networks to secure Anne's favour with the Queen. A short letter from Lord Montague informed Arthur that Honor had written to ask him to speak to his mother for one of her daughters and he would do that but it would probably be better for them to write directly to her.<sup>218</sup> The inference in the letter is that he thought Honor and his mother were perfectly capable of arranging for the daughter themselves and had only involved the men due to their status as head of family. Indeed, Arthur only seems to have been directly involved in Anne's career at court when she was required to deal directly with his half-nephew, the King.<sup>219</sup>

Honor's remarriage enhanced the opportunities and career prospects of her sons, beyond what they could have expected as country gentry, and a more varied career thanks to their continental educations.<sup>220</sup> James Basset had a particularly successful career, although affected by the changing religious climate of England. Both Arthur and Honor Lisle were religiously conservative, something used against them in Arthur's arrest in 1540, by which point he had alienated the support of Cromwell and the King. James's association with Catholic Bishop Gardiner had been brought about by this religious alliance and James remained loyal to him. He went into self-imposed exile during Gardiner's imprisonment and the reign of Edward VI. On his return to England after the accession of Mary I he was appointed to her Privy Chamber and acted as private secretary to the Queen. He married a granddaughter of Thomas More, Mary Roper, and died shortly after the accession of Elizabeth in November 1558.<sup>221</sup> His successful career in the Catholic circles of the English aristocracy was made possible by his stepfather's royal connections, enhanced with his own talents as a diplomat and courtier. As a comparison, family links were not always useful in a time of political upheaval. Francis Willoughby was brought up by the half-brother of his uncle Thomas Grey, grandfather of Lady Jane Grey. This initially improved Francis's social connections until the Grey's fall in 1554 when

---

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 401 – 02 (14 February 1535).

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 140 (17 May 1537).

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 171 – 72 (9 October 1537), pp. 453 – 56 (14 December 1537).

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 34.

<sup>221</sup> Clayton, 'Basset, James (c.1526–1558)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70827>, accessed 13 May 2015].

Francis was sent away to school.<sup>222</sup> Although Francis remained the heir to the Willoughby family and his career was untainted by this association, he spent his life as an industrialist, not a politician or figure at court.

Wider networks, outside of the immediate family could be of significant help through support and patronage. For women who did not have access to many official positions at court or in government, they were a way to access the influential circles there. Lettice Peniston was able to use her connections at court to enlist support for her cause which is something also attempted by other widows including Katherine Cholmeley who wrote to her nephew, the third earl of Cumberland, after her second husband's death as she sought the financial rights of her sons and stepsons.<sup>223</sup> Anne Bacon used her connection as sister-in-law to Lord Burghley to promote the cause of her sons in their dispute with their elder half-brother.<sup>224</sup> Bess of Hardwick also used her wide political network to petition for support over various issues.<sup>225</sup> She was acquainted with Lord Burghley as well as principal secretary to the Queen, Francis Walsingham, and developed an independent relationship with Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a privy councillor, friend of her husband's, and ally of Burghley and Walsingham.<sup>226</sup> This network came in especially useful during her time of conflict with her husband, when she was required to enlist help to defend her sons' inheritance. She asked Francis Walsingham to get the Queen's support for her sons 'to seke ther Leueings in some other place' and directly accused her husband of

---

<sup>222</sup> HMC Middleton p. 522.

<sup>223</sup> A. G. Dickens (ed.), *Clifford Letters of the Sixteenth Century* (The Publications of the Surtees Society, vol. 172, 1957) pp. 113 – 14.

<sup>224</sup> Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 80 (18 May 1581).

<sup>225</sup> ID 149, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Walsingham, 6 April 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=149> ; ID 150, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 2 August 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150> ; ID 151, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester to Bess of Hardwick, 12 July 1585, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=151>

<sup>226</sup> ID 188, Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 14 May 1578, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=188> ; ID 197, Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, 2 August 1578, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=197> ; ID 109, Bess of Hardwick and George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, 18 May [1577?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=109>

forcing her children to 'sell all they have for maintnence'.<sup>227</sup> George had threatened to take Chatsworth, part of the inheritance of Bess's younger sons from their father William Cavendish, and claim rents on the lands thereby neglecting their advancement and maintenance. She explained to William Cecil, 'yt wyll not be honorable for hym, to doe contrary to hys owne hand and sealle, and to deale so hardly with me and them', thus appealing to the idea of honourable conduct that society believed a man should adhere to in relation to his family.<sup>228</sup> As Bess's husband, George had the authority to assure the land to Bess's sons and now tried to exert it to take it away from them. Bess stated that George knew the law was on the side of her sons but he wished to force them to spend money launching a suit against him. This letter shows us George's initial responsibility for ensuring the advancement and maintenance of his stepsons and then in contrast, his dishonourable abandonment of their interests. Bess pointed out the harm he would do to his own reputation by going back on his legal promise and also by treating his stepsons badly. In response to these accusations George accused Bess of sabotaging her sons' inheritance herself by sacking Chatsworth house and causing the 'utter undoing' of her eldest son through her 'unnatural means and malice'.<sup>229</sup> He saw that Bess was not behaving in the way a mother should to protect her children or her family reputation. The accusations of both partners often charged each other with not behaving as a husband or wife should but also show how much their marital discord was wrapped up in ideas about honesty, honour and good parenting.

Reports of the situation between Bess and George at this time are also found in the papers of the Earls of Rutland. Sir John Manners and Roger Manners, brothers of the second earl of Rutland, were in frequent correspondence with George Talbot who they sometimes referred to as 'your great Earl' and who was related to them as their former brother-in-law. George Talbot's first wife was Gertrude Manners, sister of John, Roger and the second earl of Rutland, Henry. Even after her death and George's remarriage, the families maintained their connection and the Manners

---

<sup>227</sup> ID 149, Bess of Hardwick to Sir Francis Walsingham, 6 April 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=149> ; ID 229, Bess of Hardwick to George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, 14 October [1585], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=229>

<sup>228</sup> ID 150, Bess of Hardwick to William Cecil, Lord Burghley, 2 August 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=150>

<sup>229</sup> ID 119, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury to Bess of Hardwick, 4 August 1584, in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=119>



brothers were well-informed about his marital problems. George wrote to John Manners about Bess, lamenting her many friends gained 'with the help of the Master of the Rolls and of her purse'.<sup>230</sup> It seems that both George and Bess were using their networking abilities to ensure support and the Manners family were part of his support network. Roger commented to his brother that 'the countess is humble in speech and stout in actions, whereby she giveth the Earl greater advantage than her wise friends would wish' again showing how important networks of friends and kin were in this situation.<sup>231</sup> George wrote candidly to John Manners describing his 'wicked wife [...] titeling in her majestie's ear' and their problems seem to have been well-known, with one correspondent commenting to the earl of Rutland that 'it's more likely that the wars in the Low Countries will end than the discord between him and her'.<sup>232</sup> The humorous tone of this comment suggests that the status of George Talbot was not going to have a direct effect on the reputation of this part of his kin network who seem removed enough not to be affected, but close enough to act as supportive friends to him.

These political allies outside of the immediate family often chose to involve themselves in family disputes. Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester was part of a support network for both George and Bess during their marital dispute. He was very close to the family and clearly felt some level of sorrow at their troubles. He acted as a mediator between the couple in the early months of their separation but seemed particularly concerned about the effect the family dispute had on George's relationship with his eldest son.<sup>233</sup> Leicester made attempts to reconcile the two, advising George that he should be less harsh on Gilbert.<sup>234</sup> On various occasions he stated that Gilbert acted at court 'to your Lordships great honor and his owen' and 'that ther lyveth not a more carefull nor a more loving child'.<sup>235</sup> In a letter of 1584, Leicester had just lost his own young son, his only heir, and was particularly keen to appeal to his friend's fatherly compassion. As well as advising George to be more forgiving of his son who was compromised by his duty to his wife, the daughter of his stepmother Bess, and also his father who was separated from her; he also suggested George show some compassion to his stepson, William Cavendish, who

---

<sup>230</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 173 (7 February 1584/5); Gilbert also says his father mentioned this to him in ID 086, Gilbert Talbot and Mary Talbot to Bess of Hardwick, [19 September 1583?], in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins et al., accessed February 2014, <http://www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=086>

<sup>231</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 199 (8 July 1586).

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204 (21 August 1586), pp. 199 – 200 (15 July 1586).

<sup>233</sup> HMC Bath, pp. 25 – 27 (26 June 1580).

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36 – 37 (23 May 1582?).

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47 – 48 (22 Oct 1583); pp. 50 – 51 (2 August 1584).

had removed goods from Chatsworth against his wishes. He acknowledged that it was foolish of William to have forgotten reason and duty in this matter but assured George that he was 'wyse and can tell best how to order and reforme those causes'.<sup>236</sup> George did not take on board this advice, replying to Leicester that it was only his initial lenience to William which had encouraged him to repeat his offence.<sup>237</sup> However, he did reconcile with his own eldest son.

By August 1586 Gilbert was back in favour, but a letter from the following year gives an indication of why he and his wife might have wanted to remove themselves from the fraught dealings between their parents.<sup>238</sup> In a letter to one of his Manners uncles, Gilbert recounted a meeting with his wife Mary Cavendish, Bess's daughter, which had been demanded by the Queen, with his father and Walsingham in attendance.<sup>239</sup> The Queen had previously called for mediation to reconcile the couple, not law suits, and made pronouncements on their financial arrangements the year before so was likely in a state of last resort before calling in their children.<sup>240</sup> Gilbert related that the Queen:

demanded of her to say what her mother desired of my Lord, which she did, whereat my Lord grew impatient and spoke of his great offence against her. My wife answered that she knew that it was not becoming in her to withstand his Lordship in any place, still less in her Majesty's presence, but that being commanded to do so and as it concerned the utter destruction of her old distressed mother she hoped his Lordship would pardon her if she spoke the truth.<sup>241</sup>

Mary was clearly regarded as having an insight into her mother's wishes and behaviour, and seems to have remained loyal to her, describing her as 'old' and 'distressed' even though, from the evidence of other letters, it seems that Bess was utilising her networks of friends well and had many resources of her own. However, Mary did acknowledge her respect for her stepfather, and perhaps her dependence on him as he also had authority over her as father-in-law. Gilbert went on to describe how the Queen had liked her speech but it did not calm his father. After further interrogation in which Mary was called in and out of the room on several occasions, they agreed on a settlement between George and Bess. The Talbot/Cavendish family were well-known to the Queen. George had always been loyal to her and had

---

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., pp. 50 – 51 (2 August 1584).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 52 (20 August 1584).

<sup>238</sup> HMC Rutland, p. 204 (21 August 1586), pp. 212 – 13 (6 April 1587).

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., pp. 212 – 13 (6 April 1587).

<sup>240</sup> HMC Bath, p. 67 (5 March 1585/6); pp. 69 – 70 (8 May 1586); p. 70 (12 May 1586).

<sup>241</sup> HMC Rutland, pp. 212 – 13 (6 April 1587).

taken on the significant responsibility of the care of Mary, Queen of Scots, during her imprisonment in the 1580s. Their children were also regularly present at court.<sup>242</sup> Bess had attempted to garner the Queen's support during their separation, as George had, and it seems that she, and key members of her council such as Burghley, Walsingham and Leicester were uncertain about how to deal with the feuding couple.<sup>243</sup> The Queen had a good opinion of Gilbert which might explain why she used him and his wife as witnesses in their parents' discord.<sup>244</sup> This episode shows the stress that adult children could face as a consequence of being part of a stepfamily that was breaking apart. That Mary was forced to answer for her mother in an interrogation by the Queen shows the consequences of a family crisis partly created by the ties which had bound them altogether as part of the marriage. Gilbert and Mary's conflicting loyalties also put a strain on family loyalties.

Political alliances and factions had an impact on all aristocratic and gentry families. These alliances were formed and upheld through familial ties of blood and marriage and these ties created links of obligation and responsibility between family members. Remarriages which brought together families could cause confusion within these links. Although blended families nominally acted as one family and incorporated each other's networks, their own goals were often in conflict with one another. Challenges in authority between parents, step-parents and their adult children and stepchildren could lead to conflict within the context of political matters. However, this extension of political networks could see family members with a lower status benefit dramatically in opportunity and patronage. These considerations were often the foundation of a remarriage and as seen, could work to the benefit of all family members, or cause a crisis point in the family due to the confusion of authority and duty in a complicated family structure.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the long sixteenth century, remarriage was a common occurrence in family life and many people in this period would marry and have children with more than one partner. This blending together of different families and complex networks of duty, obligation and support, meant that family structure was regularly evolving. Although a 'blended family' is a modern term, it is no more anachronistic than any

---

<sup>242</sup> Grace Cavendish served the Queen at court, HMC Bath, pp. 34 – 35 (19 May 1581) and Gilbert often passed messages from the Queen to his father for example, HMC Bath, pp. 59 – 60 (12 October 1585).

<sup>243</sup> HMC Bath, p. 41 (5 March 1582/3).

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65 (1 January 1585/6).

other, including referring to family members as 'step'. In many ways, step-relations acted in a similar way to a horizontal kin network, for example like kin networks created by any other marriage. Yet the dynamic was different as the relationship between step-parents and stepchildren was couched in terms of 'natural parenting' and the duty of step-parents to act towards their stepchildren as they would their own. Both women and men viewed their families in these fluid terms and used their wide networks for different purposes. The lack of a separate terminology for these relations created by remarriage is indicative of the bond created. Stepfamilies were largely regarded as one entity and differentiation between step-parents, children and siblings was rare. Although bonds between natural relatives were usually stronger, aristocratic children were often separated from their families as they were educated or in service, and in many cases were no closer to their full-blood relations. Step-parents were expected to care for and protect the interests of their stepchildren. The amount of literature expressing worry about the fate of children who found themselves with a wicked stepmother or father shows the unstable position a young child could find themselves in, but also shows the values of a society which stressed the responsibilities of parenting and sought to make sure these were adhered to in all family situations. Accordingly it appears that parents worked together to ensure the best education and opportunities for their children, sometimes linking them together through educational experiences or marriage. In most families, ensuring a child's wellbeing and financial security was of interest to the entire family.

However, the complex networks that were created could also become a source of tension within families. In times of crisis such as a marriage breakdown, or a descent into debt, parents and children could find their loyalties compromised as they were forced to take sides against a step-parent or sibling. Particularly for adult children, finding oneself opposed to the behaviour of a step-parent could be a difficult situation. As in the previous chapter where overlapping roles could cause problems as individuals acted with different levels of authority as sons, fathers and brothers, overlapping roles in stepfamilies could see individuals caught between their parents and stepparents, and various degrees of siblings. Gilbert Talbot became embroiled in a situation with his parents and wife where his loyalty was divided between his father, stepmother, wife, siblings, and stepsiblings in his parents' marriage breakdown. This episode of crisis was an opportunity for Gilbert to negotiate authority within his family. As his father's heir he had some freedom not to support him, although this was met with disapproval and the idea that he had not behaved correctly as a son, but later as the head of his family was able to assert authority

against his stepmother and stepsiblings. The dynamics of different family members who represented different families, dynasties and lineages could create situations where it was not at all clear where support was supposed to lie between individuals. However, many were adept at using these layers of networks to their own advantage. In an era when stepfamilies were common, it was a useful skill to cultivate relationships with different relatives and use family connections for support.

Following the crisis point of a parental death, the remarriage of a parent was the next crisis point faced by the late medieval and early modern family. There were many different manifestations of this situation depending on the composition of families, the circumstances of individuals and their own life goals and agendas. But it is clear that remarriage had a profound effect on the parent-child relationship. A new step-parent was expected to have the same parental obligations and concern as a natural parent and it was an important aspect of their own reputation and honour to care for all their children; however, it did alter networks and distribution of authority within the family. Children could find themselves with new obligations to show deference to a father and elder siblings, or relatives of a higher social status. As children entered adulthood these relationships became even more complex as they tried to fit this multi-faceted family network into their own support networks. A parent's priorities might also be altered by their new family and status resulting in the same issues of authority, deference and obligation. The increasingly reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship as it progressed through the life cycle often added this complication in family life to the challenges of authority and duty it faced. Although a common experience for parents and children, remarriage was certainly an unstable one which required careful handling of social obligations and wider kin networks, deriving from the change in the parent-child relationship.



## **Conclusion**

The family of late medieval and early modern England was complex and dynamic, often seeing many changes in structure as it evolved through its own cycle and the life cycles of the individuals of which it was composed. Family life could be a much messier experience than previous research has suggested. The aristocracy and gentry of the long sixteenth century were part of complex networks of family, friends, acquaintances, and allies through which they performed their economic and political activities. Family structures were equally as complex, and an integral part of these networks. Many factors affected the way an individual could act and these have been shown by a focus on crisis points in family life where age, social status, personality and family structure all converged to shape behavioural patterns. This conclusion offers a new focus for the history of the family, exploring how individuals used their varied and changing relationships with different family members to organise and use effective networks. Many rites of passage and crises associated with them were linked with the development and upkeep of these networks. Parents had a responsibility to organise the education that would best benefit their children in the future, as well as find a suitable marriage match. Children were crucial parts of their parents' networks as links were fostered through placements in service and at university, and through marriage. Subsequent marriages, often arranged by individuals themselves, created new layers of affinity between individuals and created blended family structures which could also be utilised. In this period, crisis points were often caused by the intricacies of linking families together through ties of marriage or remarriage, or through the breaking or weakening of these bonds by clandestine marriages, remarriages and death. A consideration of the family through crisis points has shown the complexity of maintaining and developing ties both within and between complex family structures.

Adherence to codes of obedience and authority were crucial to the success of these networks based on familial connections and reputation. The obedience expected from children to their parents was clearly expressed in conduct literature and reflected in the behaviour of parents and children. However, this thesis has shown that 'child' and 'parent' were statuses which endured throughout life, which adds a significant new insight into the study of individuals and the factors which affected behaviour. Not only does it expand the temporal conception of 'childhood', but has also shown how important family status was to the life chances of individuals in this period. Case studies have shown moments where individual behaviour was considerably influenced by familial roles and obligations, for example when children

had to choose which parent to support during marital conflicts, and reactions to children disobeying parental authority by getting married to someone not seen as suitable. Authority in the parent-child relationship was often negotiated as children began to assert adult authority against the wishes of their parents, and challenged after the death of a father when mothers and sons had to adapt to the changing status of their son as head of the family.

Codes of duty and obligation were crucial to the survival and advancement of families in this period so many emotional responses, particularly hurt or anger during times of crisis are indicative of the expectations of parents and children and the consequences for individual transgressions. These emotions had a function in ensuring that individuals behaved in accordance with the wellbeing of the entire family. More positive emotions like affection and love can also be viewed as functional in that they encouraged mutual support and the performance of duty. However, it is possible to discern emotions in this relationship beyond those which show us the expectations of family life and the practicalities of belonging to an upper class family subject to patriarchal and hierarchical codes. Letters were chosen as the main source base for this thesis because they are personally written between individuals. It is often described as a limitation that correspondence in this period was governed by conventions and formulae used to indicate status and that this can obscure personal responses and emotions. However, when these conventions were altered or not followed they can highlight an individual's own purpose and the feelings behind their writing. The tone of letters, the use, or not, of formulaic greetings and signatures, and material aspects like page layout and seals have all been shown to indicate the emotions of the sender as they were adapted to fit different circumstances. The informality of writing in the margins of a page, or not using a long formal greeting suggest close and mutually supportive parent-child relationships, as do the inclusion of coloured silk in a seal or the mention of an accompanying gift. Studying the relationships between parents and their adult children is vital in gathering this type of evidence in order to further understand the parent-child relationship. Also often stressed as a potential obstruction in accessing the true meaning of a letter is the fact that many, particularly women's letters, were written collaboratively by a combination of the individual named as writer, secretaries and other family members. However, in the case of family letters this is also a useful indicator of close bonds and relationships. Collaborative or joint letters between parents, children and siblings are evidence of the importance of close family ties in conducting business which would affect all of its members and in many families this



process continued into the adulthood of children, often after they had married and formed new families of their own.

Considering an expanded definition of childhood by extending it as a status experienced by adults highlights problems and contradictions between conduct literature and lived experience. Puritan conduct literature of the late sixteenth century emphasised the authority of male heads of household and followed Protestant attitudes which promoted patriarchalism as an ideal family state, but also contradicted this theory. If a male head of household still had a living parent then it was not always clear whose opinions had primacy. Mothers and sons could come into particular tension in these situations, as could siblings who, although each responsible for their own immediate family, might be required to show obedience to their elder brother or other male relative as head of the wider family. These values became increasingly influential over the early modern period. However the evidence presented in this thesis has shown much continuity in the way that aristocratic families operated and what their goals and aspirations for their offspring were. The Protestant ideas which came to prominence in post-Reformation England took some time to infiltrate into elite social classes who, although operated within networks based on their religious affiliation, were primarily concerned with increasing or maintaining their wealth and status, and ensuring the same for their children. The impact of the Reformation on family life is tested by this conclusion as it shows the complex factors which affected the organisation of the family and the internal challenges it posed to patriarchalism.

Another theme of this research has been the overlap of the individual and family life cycle. It has shown that the roles and responsibilities of individuals changed and developed across their own life cycle, and that of the family. During adolescence, children's awareness of their own futures could lead them to defy parental authority and make their own decisions, rather than decisions that fitted the aims of the wider family, for example a clandestine marriage or entering a new political alliance. The creation of a new family by a remarriage meant that family life cycles overlapped as the aims and goals of the old family merged with that of the new. Work on 'emotional communities' in the past suggests that individuals were members of communities of different sizes which shared values and aspirations, but as this thesis has shown, individuals could be members of different family networks, created by marriages and remarriages, and so potentially part of communities with different expectations about emotions and their expression. Blended families were required to unify their interests with their new family members, and the wider networks that came with them. This

process could be difficult and was affected by different factors including the structure of the family, and ages of parents and children. The roles of each individual changed as they moved through the life cycle becoming siblings, spouses and parents, and evidence presented here has shown the variety of ways in which families worked together to strengthen ties, and how commonly they found themselves in times of crisis as goals and values did not align.

The terminology used by people to refer to their family members exemplifies the changes and the fluidity in the roles they inhabited. Adolescent children were likely to use extremely deferential language in correspondence with parents, and although convention meant they continued to do this as adults, the tone and content of letters usually altered to reflect the more equal relationship they had as adults. In stepfamilies, the terms family members used to refer to each other was indicative of their bonds and relationships. Most adhered to the convention of referring to stepmothers and fathers as simply 'mother' and 'father' and stepsons and stepdaughters as 'son' or 'daughter'. The term 'step' was rarely used. This shows how important family ties were in this period and that duty and close bonds were expected of families created by remarriage and is an area of study which could be explored further under the History of Emotions framework to look at the nature of familial bonds in this period. Indeed, during times of tension in family life it is the digression from these naming conventions that can reveal the workings of the relationship. Parents might refer to 'your children', or children to their 'father-in-law', or similar ways of distancing themselves. Throughout the long sixteenth century there was fluidity in the terminology used to refer to family members which indicates the dynamic nature of responsibility and authority within the family and the extent to which roles changed in different circumstances. As more rigid terminology emerged, for example 'step' and the use of words like 'husband' and 'mother' became more fixed we can see the solidifying of family roles and the delineation of parenting and the family as domestic concerns. There is much evidence to show that relationships between family members were characterised by affection, even when the workings of the family were essential to wider political and economic concerns. By looking at the lived experience of families and the terms they used to refer to each other, this research shows that affective bonds were crucial to the organisation of family life. In conjunction with an analysis of changing terminology to refer to family roles, it presents a new approach arguing that these changes can further inform our understanding of how family life changed over time.

Research to date has usually considered parenting in gendered terms, focusing on mothers and fathers separately. This research has shown that mothers and fathers commonly worked in partnership to bring up their children, and to support them as adults. Although gender did affect some of the roles parents took on, for example mothers were usually responsible for family healthcare, and, increasingly over the period, religious instruction, and fathers were more regularly consulted about financial matters, gender was not the only important factor in the experience of parenting. In reality, individual personality, family connections, geographical proximity, and health, among other factors, could affect their ability to parent, or the ways in which they were able to do so. A mother with a high level of education might have more influence over their son's university curriculum, and the ill health of a father might stop him from acting as an everyday correspondent with his children. The death of a father has also been shown as a crisis point in family life where mothers could take over legal responsibility for young children, or act as a source of emotional and practical support for an older child taking on new responsibility after this event. The physical separation of parents and children meant that others were required to take on a parental role. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, tutors and family employees could all be utilised by parents as surrogate parental figures. This is an area of study that has not yet received focused attention from historians and considerably adds to our understanding of the reality of parenting aristocratic children in the long sixteenth century. Considering parenting as a partnership offers a new perspective for the history of parenting and synthesises separate research on the roles of fathers and mothers which were not conducted in isolation. It also informs debates about the impact of the Reformation on the family which has been seen as emphasising fatherly authority. This thesis has shown that mothers continued to play an active and engaged role in the upbringing of their children into the seventeenth century and their activities were more dependent on their individual personalities and strengths than their gender.

Over the long sixteenth century, the Puritan values found in conduct literature did become more significant and there is evidence that family roles became more defined as the family life of the middling sorts began to reflect this private, domestic ideal. However, aristocratic family life had always been intimately connected to political activity and continued to be so. Continuity has been shown across this period as aristocratic family goals focused on social promotion, increasing wealth, and achieving political influence. This meant that family conflict in this class could also become political, as has been shown in case studies where monarchs and high-

status government advisers were routinely contacted about issues ranging from wardship and inheritance, to marital disputes. How these crises were resolved depended on various elements, of which family status was crucial. Early modern individuals were affected by many different factors across the life cycle and the status and roles they held in their families were crucial to their everyday lives. Moments of crisis have revealed how these roles were challenged and negotiated in complex family structures during a time when expectations were increasingly visible and defined by printed literature and new religious ideals. The lived experience of family life in the long sixteenth century was fundamentally complex and required a balance of authority, support, and affective bonds in order to negotiate the challenges it faced. The parent-child relationship epitomises the dynamic and mutable nature of these family ties as both parents and children challenged and negotiated their roles to best support their own needs and those of the wider family, throughout their lives.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources: Manuscript**

#### **Bodleian Library, Oxford**

MS Eng hist c. 474 – 76, c. 481      *Herrick Family Papers*

#### **British Library, London**

Add. MS 15552      *Sidney Family Letters and Papers*

Add. MS 23212      *Misc. papers relating to Anthony Bourne and his wife, Elizabeth*

Add. MS 27395 – 96      *Gawdy Family Letters*

Add. MS 27447      *Paston Family Letters and Papers*

Add. MS 27999      *Correspondence of the Oxenden Family*

Add. MS 32092      *State papers from 1576 – 1624, vol. 2*

Add. MS 34079      *Government papers from 1513 – 1839*

Add. MS 36989 – 90      *Gawdy Family Letters and Papers*

Add. MS 78272      *Papers of George Evelyn*

#### **Cambridge University Library**

Hengrave Hall MSS 88/1 – 3      *Papers relating to the Kitson family*

#### **Cecil Papers, Hatfield House Archive**

26/48      *Letter from Dorothy Tamworth to Lady Cecil (1594)*

70/66      *Letter from Anne, Lady Cobham, to Robert Cecil (1599)*

76/5      *Letter from William, Lord Herbert, to Robert Cecil (1600/01)*

127/113      *Letter from the Earl of Northumberland to the Earl of Salisbury (1509)*

177/41      *Letter from Lady Young to the Lord Treasurer (1598)*

**Cumbria Archive Centre, Kendal**

WD/HOTH/1/33 vol. 3	<i>Lady Anne Clifford's Great Books of Record</i>
WD/HOTH/3/44/5	<i>Letters of Margaret Clifford</i>
WD/HOTH/3/44/6	<i>Letters of Anne Clifford</i>

**Longleat Archives, Wiltshire**

TH/VOL/I – V, VIII, LIII – LIV, LVIII	<i>Thynne Family Letters and Papers</i>
---------------------------------------	---

**The National Archives, Kew**

C 1/61/299	<i>Chancery case, Paston v. Pecock (1480 – 83)</i>
C 1/405/29	<i>Chancery case, Elyot v. Codrynton (1515 – 18)</i>
C 1/847/7	<i>Chancery case, Lee v. Lee (c. 1533 – 38)</i>
C 2/JasI/S35/60	<i>Chancery case, Countess of Shrewsbury v. Catcher (1595)</i>
C 2/JasIW2/63	<i>Chancery case, Wroth v. Hull (1623)</i>
E 115/400/25	<i>Certificate of Residence for Mary Wroth (1588)</i>
PROB 11/20/183	<i>Will of Robert Knollis (1520)</i>
PROB 11/20/334	<i>Will of Richard Elyot (1520)</i>
PROB 11/27/468	<i>Will of Robert Lee (1539)</i>
PROB 11/40/304	<i>Will of Lettice Peniston (1558)</i>
PROB 11/42A/157	<i>Will of James Basset (1588)</i>
PROB 11/107/101	<i>Will of Robert Wroth (1606)</i>
PROB 11/111/213	<i>Will of Bess of Hardwick (1608)</i>
PROB 11/119/253	<i>Will of Joan Thynne (1612)</i>
PROB 11/123/620	<i>Will of Robert Wroth (1614)</i>
PROB 11/183/403	<i>Will of Rowland Whyte (1639)</i>
PROB 11/183/753	<i>Will of Thomas Thynne (1640)</i>

SP 1/143, 151, 242, 156	<i>State Papers: foreign and domestic, of Henry VIII</i>
SP 53/10	<i>Secretaries of State: State Papers Scotland Series I, Mary Queen of Scots</i>
STAC 5/L34/2	<i>Star Chamber case, Leake v. Shrewsbury (1594/5)</i>

### **Primary Sources: Printed**

*The Fryer and the Boy*, (London: 1626)

*The Office of Christian parents: Shewing how children are to be governed throughout all ages and times of their life* (Cambridge: 1616)

Ayrault, Pierre, *A discourse for parents honour, and authoritie written to reclaime a counterfeit Jesuite*, trans. J. Budden (London: 1614)

Batt, Barthélemy, *The Christian mans closet Wherein is conteined a large discourse of the godly training vp of children: as also of those duties that children owe vnto their parents, made dialogue wise, very pleasant to reade, and most profitable to practise, collected in Latin by Bartholomew Batty of Alostensis. And nowe Englished by William Lowth* (London: 1591, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Breton, Nicholas, *The Mother's Blessing* (London: 1602)

Cleaver, Robert, *A godlie forme of householde gouernment for the ordering of priuate families, according to the direction of Gods word* (London, 1598)

Copland, Robert, *The seuen sorowes that women haue when theyr husbandes be deade* (London: 1565)

Cuff, Henry, *The difference of the ages of mans life together with the original causes, progress, and end thereof* (London: 1607, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Dod, John, *The bright star which leadeth wise men to our Lord Jesus Christ, or, A familiar and learned exposition on the ten commandements gathered from the mouth of a faithfull pastor by a gracious young man, sometime scholler in Cambridge* (London: 1603, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Elyot, Thomas, *The Defence of Good Women* (London: 1534)

Elyot, Thomas, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London: 1531)

Erasmus, Desiderius, *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516)

Gibbon, Charles, *A Work worth the Reading. Wherein is contayned, fiue profitable and pithy Questions, very expedient, aswell for Parents ot perceiue howe to bestowe their Children in marriage, and to dispose their goods at their death: as for all other Persons to receiue great profit by the rest of the matters herein expressed* (London: 1591)

Gouge, William, *Of Domesticall Duties* (London: 1622)

Griffith, Matthew, *Bethel: or, a forme for families* (London: 1533)

Grymston, Elizabeth, *Miscellanea. Prayers. Meditations. Memoratives* (London: 1604)

Hakewill, George, *An apologie of the povver and prouidence of God in the gouernment of the world. Or An examination and censure of the common errour touching natures perpetuall and vniuersall decay diuided into foure bookes: whereof the first treates of this pretended decay in generall, together with some preparatiues thereunto. The second of the pretended decay of the heauens and elements, together with that of the elementary bodies, man only excepted. The third of the pretended decay of mankind in regard of age and duration, of strength and stature, of arts and wits. The fourth of this pretended decay in matter of manners, together with a large prooffe of the future consummation of the world from the testimony of the gentiles, and the vses which we are to draw from the consideration thereof* (London: 1627, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Hart, James, *Klinike or the Diet of the Diseased* (London: 1633)

Jocelin, Elizabeth, *The Mother's Legacie to her Unborn Child* (London: 1624)

Kempe, William, *The education of children in learning declared by the dignitie, vtilitie, and method thereof. Meete to be knowne, and practised aswell of parents as schoolmaisters* (London: 1588, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

LeGrand, Jacques, *Boke of Good Manners*, trans. William Caxton (London: 1487)

Leigh, Dorothy, *The Mother's Blessing: or, The Godly Counsel of a Gentlewoman not long since deceased, left behind for her children* (London: 1616)

Machiavelli, Niccolo, *Il Principe* (1532)



Perkins, M. W., *Christian Oeconomie: or, a short survey of the right manner of erecting and ordering a familie, according to the Scriptures*, trans. Thomas Pickering (London: 1609)

Phiston, William, *The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a yong Gentlewoman* (London: 1598)

Plutarch, *A president for parentes, teaching the vertuous training vp of children and holesome information of yongmen*, trans and partly augmented by Ed. Grant (London: 1571)

Raleigh, Walter, *Sir Walter Raleighs instructions to his sonne and to posterity* (London: 1632)

Smith, Richard, *The Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague 1538 – 1608*, trans. Cuthbert Fursdon (London: 1627)

Southwell, Robert *An epistle of a religious priest unto his father: exhorting him to the perfect forsaking of the world* (London: 1597)

Stockwood, John, *A Bartholomew Fairing for Parentes, to bestow vpon their sonnes and daughters, and for one friend to giue vnto another: Shewing that children are not to marie, without the consent of their parentes, in whose power and choise it lieth to prouide wiues and husbandes for their sonnes and daughters* (London: 1589)

Stubbes, Philip, *A Crystal Glass for Christian Women, Containing a Most Excellent Discourse of the Godly Life and Christian Death of Mistress Katherine Stubbes* (London: 1591)

Vaughan, William, *The Golden-Grove, moralised in three Bookes. A worke very necessary for all such as would know how to governe themselves, their houses, or their country* (London: 1608, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Vives, Juan Louis, *A Very Fruitful and Pleasant Book Called the Instruction of a Christian Woman*, trans. Richard Hyrde (London: 1529)

### **Primary Sources: Edited Collections**

*HMC Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath preserved at Longleat, Wiltshire* (London: 5 vols, 1904 – 1981)

*HMC Report on the Manuscripts of the Family of Gawdy, formerly of Norfolk* (London: 1885)

*HMC Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Portland, preserved at Welbeck Abbey* (London: 10 vols, 1891 – 1931)

*HMC Report on the Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, C. G. B., preserved at Belvoir Castle* (London: 4 vols, 1888 – 1905)

*HMC Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire* (London: 1911)

*Practical Wisdom: or, The Manual of Life. The counsels of Eminent Men to Their Children* (London: 1824)

Allen, Gemma (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon* (Camden Fifth Series: vol. 44, 2013), pp 51 – 288

Baptiste Scoones, W. (ed.), *Four Centuries of English letters: Selections from the Correspondence of one hundred and fifty writers from the period of the Paston letters to the present day* (London: 1893)

Brennan, Michael G., Noel J. Kinnamon and Margaret P. Hannay (eds.), *The Letters (1595 – 1608) of Rowland Whyte* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2013)

Carpenter, Christine (ed.), *Kingsford's Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290 – 1483* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Clifford, D. J. H. (ed.), *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1991)

Collins, Arthur, *Letters and memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James* (2 vols: 1746)

Crawford, Anne (ed.), *Letters of Medieval Women* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002)

Cross, Claire (ed.), *The Letters of Sir Francis Hastings 1574 – 1609* (Somerset Record Society: vol. 69, 1969)

Davis, Norman (ed.), *The Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, vols 1 and 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

Dickens, A. G (ed.), *Clifford Letters of the Sixteenth Century* (The Publications of the Surtees Society: vol. 172, 1957)

Everett Wood, Mary Anne (ed.), *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain, from the commencement of the twelfth century to the close of the reign of Queen Mary*, vol. 2 (London: 1846)

Hanham, Alison (ed.), *The Cely Letters 1472 – 1488* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975)

Hannay, Margaret P, Noel J. Kinnamon and Michael G. Brennan (eds.), *Domestic Politics and Family Absence: The correspondence (1588 – 1621) of Robert Sidney, First Earl of Leicester, and Barbara Gamage Sidney, Countess of Leicester* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)

Harrison, G. B. (ed.), *Advice to His Son by Henry Percy Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1609)* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930)

Hughey, Ruth (ed.), *The Correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston, 1603 – 1627* (Norfolk Record Society: vol. 14, 1941)

Kirby, Joan (ed.), *The Plumpton Letters and Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Klein, Joan Larsen (ed.), *Daughters, Wives, and Widows, Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England 1500 – 1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992)

Moody, Joanna (ed.), *The private life of an Elizabethan Lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599 – 1605* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998)

Smith, Henry, *The Sermons of Mr Henry Smith, sometime minister of St Clement Danes, London*, vol. 1 (London: 1866)

St. Clare Byrne, Muriel (ed.) *The Lisle Letters*, vols 1 – 6 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)

Wall, Alison (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne 1575 – 1611* (Wiltshire Record Society: vol. 38, 1983)

Welch, Mary A. (ed.), *Willoughby Letters of the First Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Nottingham Mixcellany, no. 4, Thornton Record Series: vol. 24, 1967), pp. 1 – 98

*Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550 – 1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University

of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013), accessed June 2015,  
<http://www.bessofhardwick.org>

### **Secondary Sources**

Abbott, Mary, *Life Cycles in England: 1560 – 1720* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Abbott, Mary, *Family Ties: English families 1540 – 1920* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Adair, Richard, *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)

Allen, Gemma, *The Cooke sisters: Education, piety and politics in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013)

Allen, Graham and Gill Jones (eds.), *Social Relations and the Life Course* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002)

Alsop, J. D., 'Religious Preambles in Early Modern English Wills as Formulae', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1989), pp. 19 – 27

Amussen, Susan Dwyer, "'The part of a Christian man": the cultural politics of manhood in early modern England', *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays presented to David Underdown*, eds. Susan D. Amussen and Mark A. Kishlanksy (1995), pp. 213 – 233

Amussen, Susan Dwyer, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988)

Anderson, Michael, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500 – 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1985)

Anselment, Raymond A., 'Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley: Maternal Letters and the Genre of Mother's Advice', *Studies in Philology*, vol. 101 (2004), pp. 431 – 453

Ariès, Philippe, *Centuries of Childhood* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)

Arkell, Tom, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 2000)

Asch, Ronald G., *Nobilities in Transition, 1550 – 1700: courtiers and rebels in Britain and Europe* (London: Arnold, 2003)

Atkinson, David, 'Marriage under compulsion in English Renaissance drama', *English Studies*, vol. 6 (1986), pp. 483 – 504

Bailey, Joanne, 'The History of Mum and Dad: Recent Historical Research on parenting in England from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries', *History Compass*, vol. 12, no. 6 (2014), pp. 489 – 507

Bailey, Joanne, *Parenting in England 1760 – 1830: Emotion, Identity, and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Bailey, Joanne, 'Paternal Power: the pleasures and perils of 'indulgent' fathering in Britain in the long eighteenth century', *The History of the Family*, vol. 17 (2012), pp. 1 – 17

Bailey, Joanne, 'The "Afterlife" of Parenting: Memory, Parentage, and Personal identity in Britain c. 1760 – 1830' *Journal of Family History*, vol. 35 (2010), pp. 249 – 270

Bailey, Joanne, "'A Very Sensible Man": Imagining Fatherhood in England c.1750 – 1830', *History*, vol. 95 (2010), pp. 267 – 292

Bailey, Joanne, 'Favoured or oppressed? Married women, property and "coverture" in England, 1660 – 1800', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 17 (2002), pp. 351 – 372

Bailey, Merridee L., *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England, c. 1400 – 1600* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2011)

Batho, G. R., 'A Difficult Father-in-law: the ninth Earl of Northumberland', *History Today*, vol. 6 (1956), pp. 744 – 751

Bell, H. E., *An introduction to the history and records of the Court of Wards and Liveries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in English Legal History, 1953)

Ben-Amos, Ilana Krausman, 'Reciprocal Bonding: Parents and their Offspring in Early Modern England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 25 (2000), pp. 291 – 312

Ben-Amos, Ilana Krausman, 'Human Bonding: Parents and their offspring in early modern England', *University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, no. 17 (1997), pp. 1 – 26

Ben-Amos, Ilana Krausman, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994)

- Berkner, Lutz K., 'Recent Research on the History of the Family in Western Europe', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 35 (1973), pp. 395 – 405
- Berry, Helen and Elizabeth Foyster (eds.), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Bindoff, S. T., *The House of Commons 1509– 1558* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1982)
- Bornstein, Diane, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983)
- Bossy, John, *The English Catholic Community, 1570 – 1850* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975)
- Botelho, Lynn and Pat Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001)
- Bowden, Caroline, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries in England and Wales: A study of attitudes and practice' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, 1996).
- Bowden, Caroline, 'Woman as intermediaries: an example of the use of literacy in the last sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', *History of Education*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1993), pp. 215 – 223
- Boyd McBride, Kari (ed.), *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 2002)
- Brennan, Michael G. and Noel J. Kinnamon, *A Sidney Chronology: 1554 – 1654* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003)
- Brennan, Michael G. and Noel J. Kinnamon, 'Robert Sidney, "Mr Johnson", and the education of William Sidney at Penshurst', *Notes and Queries* (2003), pp. 430 – 437
- Britnell, Richard, *The Closing of the Middle Ages? England, 1471 – 1529* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)
- Broomhall, Susan and Jacqueline Van Gent (eds.) *Governing Masculinities in the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011)
- Broomhall, Susan (ed.), *Emotions in the Household, 1200 – 1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

Broughton, L. T. and H. Rogers (eds.), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007)

Burrow, J. A., *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986)

Caine, Barbara, 'Letters between Mothers and Daughters', *Women's History Review*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2015), pp. 603 – 620

Calvi, Giulia and Carolina Blutrach-Jelin, 'Sibling relations in family history: conflicts, co-operation and gender roles in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. An introduction', *European Review of History*, vol. 17, no. 5 (2010), pp. 695 – 704

Cambers, Andrew, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580 – 1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Capp, Bernard, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Carlson, Eric Josef, *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)

Carmi Parsons, John and Bonnie Wheeler (eds.), *Medieval Mothering* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996)

Cavallo, Sandra and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Cavallo, Sandra and Silvia Evangelisti (eds.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family, vol. 3 The Early Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2010)

Cavallo, Sandra and Lyndan Warner (eds.), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson, 1999)

Charlton, Kenneth, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1999)

Charlton, Kenneth, 'Mothers as educative agents in pre-industrial England', *History of Education*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1994), pp. 129 – 156

Cherewatuk, Karen and Ulrike Wiethaus (eds.), *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)

Clark, Nicola, 'Dynastic Politics: Five Women of the Howard Family During the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509 – 1547' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, 2013)

- Cogan, Susan, 'Reputation, Credit and Patronage: Throckmorton Men and Women, c. 1560 – 1620', in *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation*, eds. Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 69 – 91
- Collins, Stephen, 'British Stepfamily Relationships, 1500 – 1800', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 16, no. 4 (1991), pp. 331 – 344
- Collinson, Patrick, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1988)
- Conner, Philip, *Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and Southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002)
- Cook, Ann Jennalie, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and his Society* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- Corley, Christopher, 'Preindustrial "Single-Parent" Families: The *Tutelle* in Early Modern Dijon', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 29 (2004), pp. 351 – 365
- Coster, Will, *Kinship and Inheritance in Early Modern England: Three Yorkshire Parishes* (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 1993)
- Couchman, Jane and Ann Crabb (eds.), *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400 – 1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Craig, John and Caroline Litzenberger, 'Wills as Religious Propaganda: The Testament of William Tracy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 44 (1993), pp. 415 – 431
- Crawford, Patricia, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London: Pearson, 2004)
- Crawford, Patricia, *Women and Religion in England 1500 – 1720* (London: Routledge, 1993)
- Cressy, David, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Cressy, David, 'Death and the social order: the funerary preferences of Elizabethan gentleman', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 5 (1990), pp. 99 – 119



Cressy, David, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

Croft, Pauline, 'Wardship in the Parliament of 1604', *Parliamentary History*, vol. 2 (1983), pp. 39 – 48

Davidson, Cathy N. and E. M. Broner (eds.), *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1980)

Davis, Norman, 'Style and Stereotype in Early English Letters', *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 1 (1967), pp. 7 – 18

Davis, Norman, 'The Litera Troili and English Letters', *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 16 (1965), pp. 233 – 244

Daybell, James, 'Social Negotiations in Correspondence between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England', *Women's History Review*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2015), pp. 502 – 527

Daybell, James, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512 – 1635* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

Daybell, James, 'Material Meanings and the Social Signs of Manuscript Letters in Early Modern England', *Literature Compass*, vol. 6 (2009), pp. 647 – 667

Daybell, James, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Daybell, James, 'Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition', *Women's Writing*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2006), pp. 3 – 22

Daybell, James, 'Interpreting letter and reading script: evidence for female education and literacy in Tudor England', *History of Education*, vol. 34, no. 6 (2005), pp. 695 – 715

Daybell, James (ed.), *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450 – 1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

Daybell, James (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450 – 1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001)

Daybell, James, "Ples acsep thes my skrybled lynes": The Construction and Conventions of Women's Letters in England, 1540 – 1603', *Quidditas*, vol. 20 (1999), pp. 207 – 223

Dixon, Thomas, "Emotion": The History of a Keyword in Crisis', *Emotion Review*, vol. 4 (2012), pp. 338 – 344

Dockray, Keith, 'Why did Fifteenth-Century English Gentry Marry?: The Pastons, Plumpton and Stonors Reconsidered', in *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Michael Jones (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), pp. 61 – 80

Dove, Mary, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

Dowd, Michelle, *Women's Work in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009)

Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400 – 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

Durant, David N., *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynasty* (London: Peter Owen, 1999)

Eales, Jacqueline, *Women in early modern England, 1500 – 1700* (London: UCL Press, 1998)

Eales, Jacqueline, 'The Family and kinship', *Early Modern History*, vol. 1 (1992), pp. 32 – 33

Eales, Jacqueline, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Erickson, Amy Louise, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993)

Evans, Jennifer, *Aphrodisiacs, Fertility and Medicine in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014)

Ewan, Elizabeth and Janay Nugent (eds.), *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)

Fildes, Valerie (ed.), *Women as Mothers in pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London: Routledge, 1990)

Finch, A. J., 'Parental Authority and the problem of Clandestine Marriage in the Later Middle Ages', *Law and History Review*, vol. 8 (1990), pp. 189 – 204

Fleming, Peter, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (London: Palgrave, 2001)

Fletcher, Anthony, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500– 1800* (London: Yale University Press, 1995)

Fletcher, Anthony 'Men's dilemma: the future of patriarchy in England 1560 – 1660' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, vol. 4 (1994), pp 61 – 81

Foyster, Elizabeth, 'Parenting Was for Life, Not Just for Childhood: The Role of Parents in the Married Lives of their Children in Early Modern England', *History*, vol. 86 (2001), pp. 313 – 327

Foyster, Elizabeth, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, sex and marriage* (London: Longman, 1999)

Friedman, Alice T., *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

Friedman, Alice T., 'Portrait of a Marriage: The Willoughby Letters of 1585 – 1586', *Signs*, vol. 11, No. 3 (1986), pp. 542 – 555

Frye, Susan, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010)

Frye, Susan and Karen Robertson (eds.), *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999)

Fuchs, Rachel G., 'Introduction to the Forum on the Changing Faces of Parenthood', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 29 (2004), pp. 331 – 338

Gage, John, *The History and Antiquities of Suffolk Thingoe Hundred* (London: Bentley, 1838)

Gage, John, *The History and Antiquities of Hengrave in Suffolk* (London: Carpenter, 1822)

Gerhold, Dorian, *Courts of Equity: A Guide to Chancery and other Legal Records for Local and Family Historians* (Newport: Pinhorns, 1994)

Gerritsen, Anne and Giorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

Gillis, John R., *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages 1600 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Goldberg, P. J. P., 'Childhood and Gender in Later Medieval England', *Viator*, vol. 39, no. 1 (2008), pp. 249 - 62

Goody, Jack, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Gowing, Laura, 'The Twinkling of a Bedstaff: Recovering the Social Life of English Beds 1500–1700', *Home Cultures*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2014), pp. 275 – 304

Gowing, Laura, *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2012)

Gowing, Laura, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)

Gregory, Candace, 'Raising the Good Wife: Mothers and Daughters in Fifteenth Century England', in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth Century Europe*, eds. Douglas. L. Biggs, Sharon. D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 145 – 167

Griffith, Janet D., 'Economy, Family, and Remarriage: Theory of Remarriage and Application to Preindustrial England', *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1980), p. 479 – 497

Griffiths, Paul, *Youth and Authority; Formative Experiences in England 1560 – 1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)

Haigh, Christopher, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

Hallam, Elizabeth A., 'Turning the Hourglass: Gender relations at the deathbed in early modern Canterbury', *Mortality*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1996), pp. 61 – 82

Hamling, Tara, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2010)

Hamling, Tara and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010)

- Hanawalt, Barbara A., 'Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence', in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988), p. 188 – 212
- Hannan, Leonie, 'Making Space: English Women, letter-writing, and the life of the mind, c.1650 – 1750', *Women's History Review*, vol. 21 (2012), pp. 589 – 604
- Hannay, Margaret P., *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010)
- Hareven, Tamara K., *Families, History and Social Change: Life-course and Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000)
- Hareven, Tamara K., 'Recent Research on the History of the Family', in *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History*, ed. Michael Drake (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 13 – 43
- Harris, Diane K. and William E Cole, *Sociology of Ageing* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1980)
- Harris, Barbara J., 'The Fabric of Piety: Aristocratic Women and Care of the Dead, 1450 – 1550', *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 48 (2009), pp. 308 – 335
- Harris, Barbara J., *English Aristocratic Women, 1450 – 1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Harris, Barbara J., 'Property, Power, and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England', *Signs*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1990), pp. 602 – 632
- Harris, Barbara J., 'Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style: Elizabeth Stafford and the Third Duke of Norfolk', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 15 (1982), pp. 371 – 382
- Haskell, Ann S., 'The Paston Women on Marriage in Fifteenth Century England', *Viator*, vol. 4 (1973), pp. 459 – 471
- Hay, Millicent V., *The Life of Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester (1563 – 1626)* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1984)
- Heal, Felicity, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)
- Heal, Felicity and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500 – 1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994)
- Heller, Jennifer, *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011)

Herlihy, David, 'The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment', in *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, ed. Carol Neel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 192 – 213

Holloway, Sally, 'Romantic Love in Words and Objects during Courtship and Adultery c. 1730 to 1830' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Royal Holloway, 2013)

Houlbrooke, Ralph, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Houlbrooke, Ralph, "Public" and "private" in the funerals of the later Stuart gentry: some Somerset examples', *Mortality*, vol. 1 (1996), pp. 163 – 176

Houlbrooke, Ralph, *English Family Life, 1576 – 1716: An Anthology from Diaries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988)

Houlbrooke, Ralph, *The English Family 1450 – 1700* (London: Longman, 1984)

Houlbrooke, Ralph, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation 1520 – 1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

Hurstfield, J., 'Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I', *History Today*, vol.4 (1954), pp. 605 – 612

Hurtig, Judith W., 'Death in Childbirth: Seventeenth-Century English Tombs and Their Place in Contemporary Thought', *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 65 (1983), pp. 603 – 615

Jardine, Lisa and Alan Stewart, *Hostage to Fortune: The Troubled Life of Francis Bacon* (New York: Gollancz, 1998)

Jenstad, Janelle Day, 'Lying-in Like a Countess: The Lisle Letters, the Cecil Family, and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2004), pp. 376 – 383

Jones, W. J., *The Elizabethan Court of Chancery* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)

Jupp, Peter C. and Glennys Howarth (eds.), *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997)

Kertzer, David I. and Marzio Barbagli (eds.), *The History of the European Family: Volume 1, Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500 – 1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

King, Laura, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914 – 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

King, Margaret L., 'Concepts of Childhood: What We Know and Where We Might Go', *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 60 (2007), pp. 371 – 407

Krötzel, Christian and Katariina Mustakallio (eds.), *On old age: approaching death in antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011)

Langhamer, Claire, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Larminie, Vivienne, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995)

Laslett, Peter, *The World We Have Lost: further explored* (London: 2001, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition),

Laslett, Peter (ed.), *Household and family in past time: Comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)

Lee, Becky R., 'A Company of Women and Men: Men's Recollections of Childbirth in Medieval England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2002), pp. 92 – 100

Litzenberger, Caroline, 'Local responses to changes in religious policy based on evidence from Gloucestershire wills (1540 – 1580)', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 8 (1993), pp. 417 – 439

Macfarlane, Alan, *Marriage and Love in England 1300 – 1840* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)

Mair, Katy, 'Material Lies: Parental Anxiety and Epistolary Practice in the Correspondence of Anne, Lady Bacon and Anthony Bacon', *Lives and Letters*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012), pp. 59 – 74

Marshall, Peter, '(Re)defining the English Reformation', *The Journal of British Studies*, vol. 48 (2009), pp. 564 – 586

Marshall, Peter, *Reformation England 1480 – 1642* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003)

Martin, G. H. and Peter Spufford (eds.), *The Records of the Nation: The Public Record Office 1838 – 1988, The British Record Society 1888 – 1988* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1990)

Maxwell, Felicity, 'Household Worlds: Textualising Social Relations in the Correspondence of Bess of Hardwick's Servants, c. 1550 – 1590' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Glasgow University, 2014)

McCarthy, Conor, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature and Practice* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004)

McIntosh, Marjorie K., 'Women, Credit, and Family Relationships in England, 1300 – 1620', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2005), pp. 143 – 163

McKitterick, David, *A History of Cambridge University Press*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

McMahon, Clara P., *Education in Fifteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1947)

Mendelson, Sara Heller, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, no. 85 (1979), pp. 126 – 35

Menuge, Noël James, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001)

Menuge, Noël James (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Law* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000)

Miller, Naomi J. and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011)

Miller, Naomi J. and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006)

Miller, Naomi J. and Naomi Yavneh (eds.), *Maternal Measures: Figuring caregiving in the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000)

Moss, Rachel E., *Fatherhood and its Representation in Middle English Texts* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013)

Muir, Edward, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Muldrew, Craig, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998)



- Nelson, Claudia, *Invisible Men: Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850 – 1910* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995)
- Newton, Hannah, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580 – 1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Nock, Stephen L., *Sociology of the Family* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991)
- North, Marcy L., 'Women, the material book and early printing', in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 68 – 82
- O'Day, Rosemary, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500 – 1900* (London: Macmillan, 1994)
- O'Day, Rosemary, *Education and Society 1500 – 1800: The social foundations of education in early modern Britain* (Harlow: Longman, 1982)
- O'Hara, Diana, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)
- O'Mara, V. M., 'Female Scribal Ability and Scribal Activity in Late Medieval England: The Evidence?', *Leeds Studies in English*, vol. 27 (1996), pp. 87 – 130.
- Orme, Nicholas, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)
- Outhwaite, R. B. (ed.), *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage* (London: Europa Publications Ltd, 1981)
- Ozment, Steven, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Harvard University Press, 1985)
- Pettegree, Andrew (ed.), *The Reformation World* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- Phillips, Kim M., *Medieval Maidens: Young Women and Gender in England, 1270 – 1540* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
- Phillips, Kim M., 'Margery Kempe and the Ages of Woman', in *A Companion to 'The Book of Margery Kempe'*, eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004), pp. 17 – 34
- Plamper, Jan, 'The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory*, vol. 49 (2010), pp. 237 – 265

Pollock, Linda A., 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2004) pp. 567 – 590

Pollock, Linda A., 'Rethinking Patriarchy and the Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 23 (1998), pp. 3 – 27

Pollock, Linda A., 'Training a child in the way he/she should go. Cultural transmission and childrearing within the home in England, circa 1550 – 1800', in *Education and Cultural Transmission: Historical Studies of Continuity and Change in Families, Schooling and Youth Cultures*, eds. Johan Strum, Jeroen Dekker, Richard Aldrich and Frank Simon (Paedagogica Historica Supplementary Series 2, 1996), pp. 79 – 104

Pollock, Linda A., 'Younger Sons in Tudor and Stuart England', *History Today*, vol. 39, no. 6 (1989), pp. 23 – 29

Pollock, Linda A., "'Teach her to live under obedience': the making of women in the upper ranks of early modern England", *Continuity and Change*, vol. 4 (1989), pp. 231 – 258

Pollock, Linda A., *Forgotten children: Parent-child relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

Potter, David, 'The Private Face of Anglo-French Relations in the Sixteenth Century: the Lisles and their French friends', in *The English Experience in France c. 1450 – 1558 War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange*, ed. David Grummitt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 199 – 222

Prior, Mary, 'Wives and wills 1558 – 1700', in *English rural society 1500 – 1800; Essays in honour of Joan Thirsk*, eds. John Chartres and David Hey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 201 – 225

Raumolin-Brunberg, Helena and Terttu Navalainen, 'Like father (un)like son: a sociolinguistic approach to the language of the Cely family', in *Studies in Middle English Linguistics*, ed. Jacek Fisiak (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), pp. 489 – 511

Read, Sara, *Menstruation and the Female Body in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Reddy, William M., *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Richardson, Catherine, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England: The Material Life of the Household* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006)

Richardson, R. C., 'The Generation Gap: Parental Advice in Early Modern England', *Clio*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2002), pp. 1 – 25

Rosenthal, Joel T., *Old Age in late medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996)

Rosenthal, Joel T., 'Three-Generation Families: Searching for Grandpa and Grandma in Late Medieval England', in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York: Garland Publishing Ltd, 1996), pp. 225 – 38

Rosenthal, Joel T., 'When Did you Last See your Grandfather?', in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Rowena E. Archer (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1995), pp 223 – 44

Rosenwein, Barbara H., *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006)

Rublack, Ulinka, 'Matter in the Material Renaissance', *Past and Present*, vol. 219 (2013), pp. 41 – 85

Ryrie, Alec, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Sabean, David Warren, Simon Teuscher and Jon Mathieu (eds.), *Kinship in Europe: Approaches to Long-Term Development (1300 – 1900)* New York: Berghahn Books, 2007)

Sather, Kathryn, 'Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Child-Rearing: A Matter of Discipline', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 22 (1989), pp. 735 – 743

Schneider, Gary, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500 – 1700* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005)

Schneider, Gary, 'Affecting correspondences: Body, behaviour, and the textualisation of emotion in early modern English letters', *Prose Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2000) pp. 31 – 62

Schochet, Gordon J., *Patriarchalism in Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975)

Schutte, Kimberly, 'Marrying Out in the Sixteenth Century: Subsequent Marriages of Aristocratic Women in the Tudor Era', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 38 (2013), pp. 3 – 16

Sears, Elizabeth, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)

Sharpe, Pamela, 'Dealing with Love: The Ambiguous Independence of the Single Woman in Early Modern England', *Gender and History*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1999), pp. 209 – 232

Shepard, Alexandra, 'From anxious patriarchs to refined gentlemen? Manhood in Britain c. 1500 – 1750', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 44 (2005), 281 – 95

Shepard, Alexandra, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Shepard, Alexandra, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c. 1580-1640', *Past and Present*, vol. 167 (2000), pp. 75 – 106

Sheridan Walker, Sue (ed.), *Wife and Widow in Medieval England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993)

Slater, Miriam, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House* (London: Routledge, 1984)

Slater, Miriam, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England: A Rejoinder', *Past and Present*, no. 85 (1979), pp. 136 – 40

Slater, Miriam, 'The Weightiest Business: Marriage in an Upper-Gentry Family in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, vol. 72 (1976), pp. 25 – 54

Smith, Hilda L., 'Humanist education and the Renaissance Concept of Woman', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500 – 1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 9 – 29

Sommerville, Margaret R., *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London: Arnold, 1995)

Stearns, Peter. N and Carol Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 90, no. 4 (1985), pp. 813 – 836

Stone, Lawrence, *The Family Sex and Marriage in England 1500 – 1800* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1977)

Stone, Lawrence, 'The Rise of the Nuclear Family in Early Modern England: The Patriarchal Stage', in *The Family in History*, ed. Charles E. Rosenberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), pp. 13 – 57

Strange, Julie-Marie, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class 1865 – 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Stretton, Tim, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Tadmor, Naomi, 'Early modern English kinship in the long run: reflections on continuity and change', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 25 (2010), pp. 15 – 48

Tadmor, Naomi, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Tadmor, Naomi, 'The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, vol. 151, no. 1 (1996), pp. 111 – 140

Tanskanen, Sanna-Kaisa, 'Intertextual networks in the correspondence of Lady Katherine Paston', in *Letter Writing*, eds. Terttu Nevalainen and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007) pp. 73 – 87

Thane, Pat, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Thirsk, Joan, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500 – 1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)

Thirsk, Joan, 'Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century', *History*, vol. 54, no. 182 (1969), pp. 358 – 77

Todd, Barbara J., 'The remarrying widow: a stereotype reconsidered', in *Women in English Society, 1500 – 1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 54 – 92

Travitsky, Betty S. and Patrick Cullen (eds.), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Series 1, Printed Writings 1500 – 1640: Part 2, vol. 8, Mother's Advice Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001)

Travitsky, Betty S. and Adele F. Seeff (eds.), *Attending to Women in Early Modern England* (London: Associated University Presses, 1994)

Tyacke, Nicholas (ed.), *England's Long Reformation, 1500 – 1800* (London: Routledge, 1998)

Tyacke, Nicholas, 'Wroth, Cecil and the Parliamentary Session of 1604', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. 50 (1977), pp. 120 – 25

Wall, Alison, *Power and Protest in England 1525 – 1640* (London: Arnold, 2000)

Wall, Alison, 'For love, money or politics? A clandestine marriage and the Elizabethan court of Arches', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 38 (1995), pp. 511 – 533

Wall, Alison, 'Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat', *History*, vol. 75 (1990), pp. 23 – 38

Wall, Alison (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575 – 1611* (Devizes: Wiltshire Record Society, 1983)

Wall, Alison, 'The Feud and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: a reconsideration', *Sydney Studies in English*, vol. 5 (1979), pp. 84 – 95

Ward, Jennifer, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1992)

Warner, Lyndan, 'Remembering the Mother, Presenting the Stepmother: Portraits of the Early Modern Family in Northern Europe', *Early Modern Women*, vol. 6 (2011), pp. 93 – 125

Watt, Diane, *Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007)

Watt, Diane (ed.), *The Paston Women: Selected Letters* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004)

Watt, Diane (ed.), *The History of British Women's Writing: Volume 1, 700 – 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012)

Wiesner, Merry E., 'Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1987), pp. 311 – 321

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E., *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Williams, Graham, *Women's Epistolary Utterance: A Study of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1575 – 1611* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2013)

Wilson, Adrian, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Phillipe Ariès', *History and Theory*, vol. 19 (1980), pp. 132 – 153

Wilson, Lisa, *A History of Stepfamilies in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014)

Wilson, Stephen, 'The myth of motherhood a myth: the historical view of European child-rearing', *Social History*, vol. 9 (1984), pp. 181 – 198

Winchester, Barbara, *Tudor Family Portrait* (Jonathan Cape: London, 1955)

Whitelock, Anna, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Wiebracht, Ben, 'First-cousin Marriage in Tudor and Stuart England: 1540 – 1688', *Journal of Family History*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2015), pp. 24 – 38

Youngs, Deborah, *The Life Cycle in Western Europe, c. 1300 – 1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006)